

CUBA'S MILITARY 1990-2005

REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIERS DURING
COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY TIMES

Hal Klepak



This is the first book to examine the Cuban military in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, a period that created political and economic challenges for Cuba in the absence of Soviet support. By providing important historical and political background, Klepak reveals a complete picture of the development and engagement of the military. This analysis is essential to understanding how U.S.-Cuban relations will develop in the future, particularly in the event that a successor to Castro comes to power.

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CUBA'S MILITARY 1990-2005

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To my mother, who loved Cuba

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The conclusions to these reflections are of course debatable. Modern Cuba attracts much attention and passion and if ever the expression “more heat than light” applied to a debate, the Cuba of today would bring it close to its maximum. They are the results of analysis, sustained usually but not always by traditional academic support, for reasons I try to make clear in my *avant propos*. Despite all the assistance received, the responsibility for them is mine and mine alone.

Avant Propos

The history of Cuba's defense is the story of changing strategic, political, economic, and social circumstances against a backdrop of steadier geopolitical realities and wider international forces. Cuba since the arrival of Columbus has seen all manner of external and internal threats faced by its leaders and population. From pirates and corsairs, to foreign fleets and armies, to insurgent plotters from abroad to their equivalents at home, from internal revolutions against the exploitative state to the opposition of the greatest power since Rome.

Little wonder then that the story of Cuba's defense, and the people engaged in it, should be so fascinating as well as so challenging to understand. On occasion superficially easy to grasp, Cuban society is in reality anything but that. Unity was never a strong point in Cuban society and yet the need for unity in the face of powerful threats was almost always there. Indeed, today's calls for unity, while doubtless shrill, are the result of the understanding on the part of most Cubans that past divisions have been disastrous for the island and that only the union of the highly individualistic Cubans could ever hope to ensure effective security. Names which will become familiar in this text—Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, Máximo Gómez, Antonio Maceo, José Martí, Fidel Castro—are all associated with the difficulties of unity and defense. Such calls for unity should not, however, blind us to the variety behind them. Defending coastal towns against pirates is a different matter to defending a revolution against its enemies. Defending a colony against an enemy army is a different proposition altogether to protecting the interests of voracious dictators against the more progressive inclinations of the politically active elements of their people. The arms and armies needed varied greatly from context to context.

The history of Cuban security affairs includes all of these elements and many more. At almost every stage of the island's post-Columbus history there have been questions of internal *and* external defense—defense against foreign pirates but with smoldering slave discontent just below the surface at home; defense against the British but with

contraband with those same enemies essential to colonial prosperity; defense against insurgent enemies on the continent while having their sympathizers much closer to home; civil war as a reality from 1868 to 1878 and to some extent from 1895 to 1898; and more recently defense against the United States while facing potentially important opposition on the island and close by among its migrant communities.

Cuba's importance in geopolitical terms for a series of great powers complicates matters still further. Spain needed Cuba not for its own sake but for its geographic position, superb harbors, and utility as a base for expansion. Later Madrid needed it as a support for its operations in defense of the empire against its rebelling subjects. Still later it kept the island for the wealth it brought the mother country. United States' interest in control of the island, as we will see, has been constant if varied in intensity and *raison d'être*. Washington saw the island as a "rotten fruit" ready to fall into its hands, as a needed strategic asset which should and could be seized and held, as a valuable holding which had to be kept out of others' hands, or as a political hot potato that must be controlled but not maintained as "American" in any too visible sense. Long seen as a bridgehead for a foreign ideology and power that threatened the United States and its world position, it was finally seen as a holdover from a bygone era whose political importance had become domestic rather than international as a result of the power and influence of its "exiles" within rather than without the U.S. body politic.

These and many other factors have entered or still enter into play when Cuban defense and security are discussed. Tracing their force and interrelationship is not easy. But the story that such an overview of events can give is enlightening on any number of levels. The natives of Cuba had to fight for their survival as a political entity as well as a civilization. The early Spanish settlers had to struggle to maintain themselves and their settlements against the raids of pirates and corsairs whose victory could lead to the total destruction of their livelihoods and even their lives. As British naval power gained ascendancy it became clear that the colony might have to defend itself against conventional European attack. After Havana fell in 1762 these requirements became even clearer.

Soon after the Spanish American revolutions began in the early nineteenth century their successes showed the need for Spain and loyal Cubans to prepare seriously for defense against their former fellow subjects. Without this the very political system of the colony could be lost and perhaps its social and economic systems as well. Rebellions, filibustering ideas and plots before the Ten Years' War began in 1868 kept the island and its elites on the *qui vive* and the

Guerra Grande of 1868–1878, despite the unpopularity of this interpretation in Cuba, proved a civil war in many of its aspects, and pitted those seeking independence or annexation against those still loyal to Spain in a fierce struggle.

When war broke out again in 1895, divisions on the island were clearer. Cuba would be independent if the insurgents won and would not be if they lost. Both sides made major efforts to make victory theirs. U.S. intervention made both sides lose. And José Martí's nightmare of exchanging one master for another resulted in a humiliating and shattering experience as the country passed from being first under total U.S. occupation and administration to then under a thinly disguised protectorate where U.S. interests were the dominating feature of supposedly independent national life. The Rural Guard and army that resulted from this experience had the unenviable job of defending the interests of Americans and a Cuban elite usually closely linked to U.S. citizens. Little wonder then that when tasked with quelling a legitimate revolution aiming at continuing the work of acquiring real independence, those forces were not up to the job. They collapsed in the face of absurdly small groups of insurgents fighting with few weapons, little money, and no major foreign support.

The Cuban revolutionary government of today, in its defense policy, has a strong sense of history, and particularly a feeling for what went wrong when Cuban defense efforts have been overwhelmed in the past. The lack of unity seemed uniquely present in each case. Little wonder that Fidel drew the lessons of that requirement for unity in everything he did but especially in his dealings with Cuba's massive and overwhelmingly powerful neighbor. Even in peacetime, U.S. policy had been able to ensure that the dreams of Martí and other Cuban patriots were frustrated, and that powerful foreign economic interests were firmly in control in Havana. No unified rejection of that situation could be obtained under the republic, and the United States sat supreme as a result.

Thus, reform, especially significant reform as Fidel had laid out in his speech of 1953 "History Will Absolve Me," could not be carried out without a country unified and determined to do so. Nor would the defense of the Revolution, that cry going back at least to the Ten Years' War if not before, succeed without unified backing. No one can understand Cuban domestic politics, much less foreign and defense policy, without bearing that in mind.

For over forty-five years the Cuban government has faced the often-ferocious opposition of the greatest power in the world, sitting directly across a narrow strait from its capital city. U.S. leaders could with time understand what even a determined anti-Castroist such as

Robert Scheina observed much later that "Fidel Castro's campaign was the most influential military victory within Latin America since the wars for independence that had occurred more than 130 years earlier."¹ There was little likelihood that such a victory for the forces of dramatic reform, not to say revolution, could avoid encountering the determined opposition of immensely powerful domestic and international elements whose aim would be to overturn that victory and all that it might entail. Whatever one may think of domestic or even foreign policy in Cuba since the Revolution's triumph, defense policy has had to be realistic and cognizant of the almost impossible challenge posed by this situation.

Fidel has sought unity above all, unity doubtless under his leadership, but unity nonetheless. He is certain that the loss of that unity will signal the loss of Cuba's independence as well as the destruction of the gains of the Revolution. The handling of human rights reflects this. Fidel has recently said that a one-party state in Cuba is not necessarily a permanent thing and represents a temporary answer to the country's needs. But while such an overwhelming power as the United States remains determined to sink the regime and its reforms, dissidence for Fidel remains little more than treason. Since dissidence for him is automatically linked to the designs of "the enemy"; thus it must be treason. That this fits well with his keen desire to remain in power, while true, may be rather beside the point at this stage.

Fidel and many other Cubans point with some annoyance, when criticized for their human rights record, to how liberal democracies have dealt with human rights when their regimes were threatened with destruction. London, Ottawa, Washington, and Paris are not, in this view, on very firm ground when they criticize Cuba for curbing human rights when national survival is at stake. Commonwealth and U.S. handling of enemy minorities on their soil during the world wars, curbs on freedom of the press and fascist parties, and a host of other examples come to mind. Fidel suggests that no country has faced a more powerful or longer opposition than has Cuba and that never has a regime and system been under greater pressure than have those of Cuba. Thus, Havana is, in this view, more than justified in restricting the human rights of its citizens if they, perhaps unknowingly, serve the interests of the power which is out to destroy their country.

When all this is added to the view that the most important human rights, such as access to education, medicine, housing, and recreation, are more readily provided by Revolutionary Cuba than by any of the governments of Latin America, which are rarely or never criticized on these matters, Fidel feels more than justified in his actions. In all of this the experience of Cuba's military past plays a huge role. And the

degree to which the call for unity still has support within the island is directly related to this experience. This book will begin with a look at the revolutionary traditions of the Cuban armed forces, taking the story to the eve of the “*triunfo de la revolución*.” Then chapter 2 will look at the evolution of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias* (FAR) from victory in 1959 until the eve of the disasters of 1989–1991. It will then be possible to assess the importance of what happened to the forces with the collapse of the arrangements with the socialist bloc. This will be done with a view to seeing why and how the Cuban armed forces reacted so dramatically to the situation they, and their country, were quite suddenly experiencing. After this, specific topics of interest in a reflections effort such as this can be undertaken. This will be done usually by posing a question of importance to our story and then reflecting on its answer. The author is no economist but there are economic elements in the FAR response to the crisis that are truly worthy of analysis. A look at the building of confidence between security forces of the United States and Cuba, a little discussed topic, will be undertaken. In addition, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias* (FAR)’s relations with the rest of the outside world in the wake of Soviet collapse will be looked at. A study of this kind without a discussion of the FAR in any eventual political transition would be odd indeed. A final chapter will assess Cuba’s present military deterrence and defense context.

My Own Challenges

This book is neither a history, although a historical approach in many things will be obvious to most readers, nor a political analysis, nor really merely a “reflections” piece. It is instead all of these. The author is a historian of Latin American diplomacy and military affairs. And I set out some years ago to write a history of the Ten Years’ War, a major conflict in Cuba in the mid-nineteenth century about which virtually nothing is written in English. As I undertook and then deepened my research the need for another, and perhaps more important book came to be more and more present in my mind.

I had known not only Cuba but also the Cuban armed forces for several decades. I had myself, as an adolescent, watched the *Ejército Rebelde* march into Havana and had seen the first, alas not the last, fighting in my life during those dramatic days of January 1959. The evolution of that institution into the FAR has always fascinated me. Their combat successes at home and more recently abroad, their sense of honor, their pride in themselves, their revolutionary internationalism, their achievements in racial and gender terms so exceptional in

Latin America, and their loyalty to Fidel Castro; all had captured my attention on many occasions.

When I first arrived in Havana in the summer of 1958, the Rebel Army and its leader were on everyone's lips. Even for a youngster, it was obvious from my first drive to the hotel from the ship bringing my family to the island that something momentous was happening. There were troops and sandbag emplacements everywhere in Havana's center. Police, stony-faced, usually obese and mustachioed, reinforced the army with their ubiquitous presence. And why was all this happening? It was because of a mysterious leader in the mountains hundreds of kilometers away (although his columns at the time were coming west toward the capital at a rapid rate), and of the small army he commanded, determined to overthrow the bloody dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista Zaldívar and bring about deep reforms in Cuba's political, social, and economic structures as well as to make it finally and truly independent after the frustrations of efforts to reach that goal stretching back a century or more.

I then watched Fidel's triumphant march from Oriente, Cuba's then easternmost province, to the capital in the west on the television and newsreels in the cinema until with me on the sidelines across from the then Habana Hilton Hotel I saw the bearded *líder máximo* and his rather ragtag force enter the city's modern center of Vedado and take full control of the country. It was all terribly emotional for a teenager and those events have marked my life as a series of almost dream-like memories.

That *Ejército Rebelde* impressed me then as does its successor now. At the time it was full of young men, and surprisingly at the time, a number of young women. They were, of course, exuberant at victory, hopeful for the future, absolutely devoted to their commander, and idealistic. They seemed to me to be in the main country folk. Frequently bearded but always excited, optimistic, loyal, nationalistic, and smelling of their campaigning, they could hardly fail to leave a strong impression on me.

I left Cuba a little over two years later and while the island and its history drove me to the study of Latin America and to work in the field of its history and current affairs for most of my life, Cuba itself never loomed very large in that work. It was important, of course, and the island remained a strong memory for me, but the nature of research on Latin America, its diplomacy, and its armed forces, pushed me in other directions: civil-military relations during and after the troubled years of the cold war, the Falklands conflict, Central America's civil wars, Canada-Latin American relations, the Peru-Ecuador War of 1995, nuclear proliferation issues, and much else. Cuba remained an

issue of importance, of course, with Cuban–Canadian relations never entirely off the screen, Cuba’s Soviet connection a constant matter of importance and conjecture, its role in insurgencies in Latin America and Africa a source of interest and usually concern, and its internationalist adventures in medicine and sports an amazement. Thus, Cuba was not, could not be, a matter of indifference for someone with my interests. But it was not central to those interests until the Special Period began in 1990 and even then not immediately or dramatically.

The question of what would happen to Cuba in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, and then of the USSR itself, now loomed very directly indeed. Interest in the Revolution’s fate, and that of its leader, grew as the predictions of those calling the moment “Castro’s final hour” and the like appeared ever more often. And yet there was something false about those predictions even as there was something absurd in linking too directly the Cuban Revolution’s death to those of communism in Europe. This truly seemed worthy of closer study. After all, I knew well that the Cuban government did not come to power as a result of Soviet bayonets as had almost all those in Eastern Europe. Nor was it propped up by those bayonets subsequently although the military connection with Moscow grew to excessive levels. The Castro government, even in the view of its fiercest critics, did not allow the Soviets to make decisions for it, even though when pressed, as in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, Havana could make shameful decisions to support its friends in Moscow.²

Indeed, the Cuban regime enjoyed considerable legitimacy, as it seemed to me, and to successive Canadian, British, and European governments over the long years of the cold war and the U.S. attempts to isolate and unseat it. While clearly a state quite capable of severe suppression of dissent, Castro’s Cuba did not seem to me to be a classic police state of the Latin American norm or indeed one incapable of garnering majority support for its revolutionary project. While there had been winners and losers from the Revolution, it seemed to me that the immense majority felt that the revolutionary experiment was worth trying and were proud not only of its achievements but also of its successful breakaway from formerly overwhelming U.S. dominance in the years after 1959. That many also felt that the relationship with the USSR was too close was, and is, true. But that as a result the majority rejected the leadership and direction of the Revolution seems to me to be truly an exaggeration.

In addition, although I had and have many close friends among the post-1959 diaspora, I had to acknowledge that the Cuban Revolution could claim quite enormous successes. The degree of racial equality in

Cuba, while still problematic, was and is in my view massively superior to that prevailing before 1959. The role of women in society has improved beyond measure even if there is still much to be done in this field.³ And from my study of the region, I knew that there was no Latin American country that could claim such progress in these crucial criteria of progress. The Revolution had also made almost incredible advances in the fields of medicine and education, as is well known. Denials of these advances simply disqualified their makers from serious consideration when one knew the situation outside of Havana in the prerevolutionary era. Cuba had an excellent medical and educational system before 1990, one that put the rest of the countries of Latin America to shame, even the relatively wealthy and progressive ones like Argentina and Costa Rica. And despite the shocks of the Special Period, as Fidel likes so much to say, not one clinic or hospital has been closed and the same can be said for schools. This is no mean achievement for a country that has received such a body blow.⁴

In addition, in the arts and in sports, the Cuban government had been an exceptional stimulator of national advance. Cuba, known merely for male-only baseball, boxing (and cock fights) before the Revolution, came to be unsurpassed for a country of its size, population, and wealth in its ability to produce athletes of world class in athletics, basketball, fencing, volleyball, and a vast range of other sports. Cuba had long been impressive in dance and popular Latin music but since the Revolution and the full access of all citizens to the arts there had been an explosion of artistic production in dance, literature, music of many kinds, theater, painting, and virtually all the others. Cuban cultural life was simply booming, if doubtless too much under government control at times, and just as impressive, involved an enormous percentage of the active population as artists or spectators.

With this backdrop it just did not seem right to lump Cuba in completely with the corrupt, venal, inflexible, exploitive, apparatchik-ridden states of Eastern Europe. While Cuba and its government had made many errors, and were far from providing an ideal system they simply were not like the rest across the board. And the differences seemed to me to be well worth investigating.

Thus, the Special Period beckoned me to spend more time on Cuban affairs than I had done previously in my professional life. But as a historian the pull of a long-time dream of working on the Ten Years' War remained. I decided to combine the two projects in a longer but hopefully more rewarding effort that would see first a book produced on the war but then another on the FAR in the Special Period.

It seemed to me that the second book would allow me to indulge in my lifelong interest in the Cuban military, would allow me to see how this central institution was coping with the Special Period, and could be done while I worked on the nineteenth-century conflict so vital to the development of Cuban nationalism.

Such is the way of things academic, however, that the "second" book appears to be likely to see the light of day well before the "first." I have been back to Cuba some 80 times since the early 1960s. Some visits have been for little more than a few hours. Others have been in the form of academic sabbatical leave and lasted for several or even many months. In the total of over three years that I have spent in Cuba in the last fourteen, I have had enormous exposure to many elements of the national defense scene as well as that of foreign policy. I have had the support of any number of Cuban institutions and individuals who have made both work and life in Cuba more pleasant for me. A number of them have been military personnel, some of them still serving, but mostly retired or reserve.

The FAR are, however, a very closed institution in many ways. The constant threat from the United States over several decades, the surprisingly small number but nonetheless important military defectors over that period, the impact of working with Warsaw Pact forces (themselves sticklers for security), and the nature of a besieged government and country, have meant a FAR less than keen on the idea of research looking at its present conditions. While some have had success in gaining the much needed access in order to study closely its external dimension (Piero Gleijeses and Edgar Dosman are two examples), most academics have had to use secondary sources almost exclusively and have had little access to archives, interviews, special reports, time on the ground, or other essentials.

Most needed of these was time on the ground. Cuba is a wonderful country with an affable and charming population. It is also a country where a huge percentage of the population has been or is currently involved in one way or another with national defense. This can be, or can have been, through regular service in the armed forces, conscripted service therein, membership of the reserves and militias, working for military industries, or alternative service in customs, immigration, police, the Interior Ministry (MININT), or other connected realms.

When one is frank about what one is doing, many people are delighted to talk, without prompting, about their experiences in the FAR and in national defense preparation. While people are justifiably reluctant to be quoted on such issues in a society under the pressures Cuba currently knows, they are often more than willing to share their

own experiences if assured of one's discretion. I have merely listened. While I have conducted a number of more or less formal interviews with Cuban military officers, and these have been vastly useful on a large number of issues, it is the conversations with ordinary Cubans that have proven most informative.

At no time was any attempt made to discredit the Cuban government or its armed forces in all this. Indeed, if anything, the FAR came out of these conversations looking very good indeed, especially for any historian of other Latin American armed forces. I was listening to the reflections of others on their own defense, their own armed forces, their own country, of all of which they were in general immensely proud. As we shall see, Cubans do not take naturally to military service. Even the keenest officers who wish this were not so admit that it is.⁵ Thus, Cubans only very rarely indeed get "mushy" about their time in the forces. But the impression I have received overall is of a majority quite proud of what they did even if not by any means at all anxious to return to the service for any responsibilities in the future.

The questions of citing of sources must now be addressed head-on. In the context faced by Cuba and Cubans today, it is both irresponsible and unacceptable for an academic with sustained access to so many people to quote them in the usual fashion acknowledged by the academic community as proper. Where it has proven possible to do so, I have followed that rule as I have throughout my university career. But Cuba is not a usual case. The nature of the threat faced by Cuba over such a long time has produced a siege mentality that it is impossible to deny. For good or ill, the system of *Comités de Defensa de la Revolución* (CDRs: local level mobilization and citizen assistance cells that also check into potential counterrevolutionary activity), a widely present police force, a significant State Security and MININT presence, and the general and historic Cuban propensity to be fearful of "talking politics," makes for a situation where Cubans are unwilling to speak out on key themes openly unless they are certain of the listeners' discretion.

As in most one-party states that, despite many progressive elements, must still be considered in many senses dictatorships, the population is deeply worried about expressing itself openly on sensitive issues. Cuba has been like this since colonial times and is still like this. It is not China, Burma, Iran, Iraq, Syria, or even perhaps Guatemala where one's life may be literally on the line for speaking freely. Cubans need in no such way fear for their lives or even for their long-term liberty for expressing their views publicly. But it is a sad fact that such is the siege mentality of this country that citizens fear more subtle pressures, such as being placed on a government black list that might affect

employment, the ration allowance, or produce some other significant irritant. And organizing dissidence, as opposed to merely expressing dissatisfaction, especially if supported in this by the United States, can carry severe penalties indeed as events in early 2003 have again shown. Thus, the public is in large part silenced not perhaps by a great fear but by a sufficient fear nonetheless.

Cuba is certainly not a dictatorship “like the others.” But after many years of watching its political system function I must come to the conclusion that it is still a dictatorship. That there is public mobilization cannot be denied. That there is a massive public role in local government cannot be questioned. That the electoral system has interesting elements not usually judged at their proper value in Europe or the United States is a fact. But the lack of guarantees for human rights of assembly, speech, movement, and freedom of press is also a fact. The reasons for it may be more the fault of the pressures coming from the United States, a power sworn to destroy the Revolution, and may be in many ways justifiable. Indeed, many full democracies have abandoned some of their cherished human rights with less justification, if more temporarily, than has Cuba. To quote the conclusion of Louis A. Pérez, a famed *cubanista*, after a lifetime of study: “For 40 years the United States has pursued unabashedly a policy designed to destroy the Cuban government. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that internal security has developed into an obsession in Cuba.”⁶ But this does not change the fact that Cuba, with no real possibility for alternative proposals for government or governors allowed, is a dictatorship.

That dictatorship has, despite U.S. opposition and all that it implies, improved the lot of its people in simply spectacular ways across a wide board of culture and the arts, health, education, physical recreation, racial and gender equality, and in their sense of national pride and dignity. Probably no other Latin American country can say as much. However, in my view it cannot be denied that this has been done through, in part, dictatorial methods. This may or may not be justifiable as a result of the gains made. But it is certainly regrettable and is something of which the Revolution cannot be proud. The Castro government can be immensely proud of many achievements, but it most certainly cannot be so, of all its methods. Whether there was any other option is a subject so vast as to require much more space than we can dedicate to it here.

In this context, all those Cubans who spoke to me on issues related to defense and the armed forces knew they were speaking of sensitive matters on which they did not wish to be quoted. It was not that they were speaking against the government. Most were doing no such

thing. It was that the nature of the issues themselves made them nervous of expressing an opinion, *any* opinion, on them. It should be remembered that it is not that many years since close contact with foreigners was considered criminal. This has of course had to change with the invasion of tourists, foreign businessmen, teachers from abroad, and visiting artists, sports figures, and students. But among many members of the public there is still something slightly sinister in strong connections with people coming from abroad.

Talking about politics with such people means their running even more risks. But to talk about defense can be felt to be completely beyond the pale. Cuba has been "besieged" for so many years that most of the population has never known a time when there has been absolutely no sense of potential military disaster and invasion. And while the threat of invasion had until the post-September 11 wars not only subsided in the public mind but also in that of the government's strategic assessments, it has never been all that far from the surface. And since anti-Cuban rhetoric in Washington has reached newly shrill levels, there is little wonder that overall the public has not been and is not keen to discuss any matters dealing with national defense and security. The Special Period is not one where people in general feel confident and this general atmosphere must also be taken into account. As a result of all this there will be many points in this volume where the academic reader would normally have every right to ask for more information about sources. I cannot give those in many specific cases. I can give it in general here. During the whole of the 15 years of the Special Period that I have had in mind to write such a book, although it is only in the last seven that I have moved directly toward that goal, I have amassed a vast file on Cuban defense not principally in terms of military capabilities, although those are included, but more in terms of how Cubans themselves feel about their defense forces, their defense potential, and their domestic and international security context.

Where interviews were formally held and the interviewed person has said there is no problem giving details, there I have of course done the usual citing traditional in academic affairs. Where there was a conversation with someone and either there was no such permission given to use his or her thoughts, or there was informality as the rule, there will be no such details given and the absolute confidentiality of the person speaking will be respected, at least for the purposes of this volume at this time. I should say that not all this reticence stems from concerns about the reactions of Cuban state authorities. The situation in Cuba will change over time and even those very much in favor of the current government and system have some reason to suspect that those views may not forever be welcome by those in power.

It is also important to realize that the passions that Cuban issues can stir up in the United States have also meant that research in that country, normally a pillar of respect for the legitimacy of academic activities, is more difficult in the matters being looked at here. Almost all U.S. military and Coast Guard officers, as well as diplomats, Drug Enforcement Agency, and immigration officials have asked to speak only "off the record" and with no attribution of any but the most general kind. This is a pity but it is perfectly understandable at the moment.

For all secondary sources there are of course no such concerns. Yet, it may be of interest for the reader to know some of the hurdles encountered even with these sources. At one time the FAR had a number of publications. The best known was "Verde Olivo," the name taken from the color of the olive-green uniforms of the FAR over the years. This was the house magazine of the armed forces and covered topics of general interest as well as more political and strategic ones the FAR wished to share with the rank and file and even the public. It was widely read in and out of the forces and was, in Fred Judson's view, "the single most pervasive vehicle of political education in the military" in the early years after the success of the Revolution.⁷ This magazine no longer publishes regularly and its loss has meant that one of the steadily available windows into the institution has not survived the Special Period. It does still publish on occasion, especially when there is a felt need for a special edition, such as the recent forty-fifty anniversary of the landing from the "Granma."⁸

Other journals for the maritime and air forces, for the officer corps, and for the reserves, have also been cut back. Even those still producing on occasion are not available in the former way to the public. Thus, the researcher is much more "blind" than he or she has been for many years where the FAR are concerned. This is not to suggest that a deception plan is in place although any armed forces with the problems faced currently by the FAR would be inclined to hide some of them that it finds, potentially at least, most harmful. The main issue here is cost and the armed forces have clearly cut their production of publications essentially as a result of this. Related closely to this is the formerly terrible and still difficult situation for access to paper on the island since the onset of the Special Period. The priority here is clearly given to other key government needs and especially to schools. FAR publications have simply had to adjust and closing down or nearly so has been the fate of many.

At the same time on matters of great FAR interest there is clearly some paper made available. A number of books have made their way into the hands of the public in recent years. This can be seen clearly in

the bibliography of this volume. And the need to rally the public on many matters has meant that military history and books on the Revolutionary struggles have obviously been given some priority. This has reduced, but not eliminated, many of the obstacles faced by researchers in this field.

All this having been said this work seeks to provide my own reflections, and with them those of others, as well as a general picture of the FAR and its challenges at the present time. I ask the reader's patience when repetition raises its ugly head. In some senses this book is a series of essays and the nature of the beast has here and there required some of that deadly sin to survive.

The FAR is a great institution. And like all human institutions its members are prone to error. But they have an enormous amount, as a military and a national institution without pair, of which to be proud. And much of their role in the Special Period falls into that category. There continue to be errors, but it is my view that they are small compared to the challenges of the tasks at hand. Few indeed are the institutions that can claim to be without members who are not up to the dignity of their charges, and the often horrendous conditions of the Special Period have sorely tested the armed forces' code of honor, loyalty, and professionalism. But they have not yet found it wanting as an institution even if individuals within it have been discovered to lack that sense of honor and professionalism for which the FAR have become famous.

This is a story of a great institution facing its greatest challenges ever. The fighting at the Bay of Pigs, and in Africa, and especially in Angola may have proven great tests of its military skills and its devotion to duty and the Revolution. The fight against the "bandits" of the 1960s may have tested its reserves. The famous Ochoa case of 1989 may have brought into question its cohesion and some of its members' honesty. But its very sense of self is being daily challenged during the Special Period. It is an institution I have watched closely as it grew and then declined. But as this volume will show, the FAR are still far from succumbing and they are maintaining some of their greatest traditions in the face of extraordinary challenges and heavy weather. It is an impressive story. It should be told. I shall now try to do a bit of that while giving my own views on what it all means.

Chapter 1

Mambises Still? **The Revolutionary Tradition in the Cuban Armed Forces**

Even though the government in Havana and the FAR may make rather too much of it, the claim that the Cuban armed forces are, in their deepest being, and in their perception of themselves, a “revolutionary” force is still a powerful one. This is not merely a result of their having carried on and won a revolutionary war against the Batista dictatorship. Nor is it just about their subsequent participation in a process of “export” of revolution. It is because their roots lie in a revolutionary tradition that, while almost entirely overturned from 1898 until 1958, found itself again with Castro’s revolution of 1953–1959.¹

Even though it is popular to suggest that this tradition in some way goes back as far as the slave revolts under Spain, or at least to nineteenth-century filibustering expeditions; it is more accurate to date it from the rising against Spain in 1868. This is not to deny the existence of plots before that. However, the variety of motivations for them makes generalizing this into a tradition difficult. And it must likewise be admitted that until the U.S. Civil War (1861–1865) most serious plots and sea borne “liberating” expeditions were aimed at absorption into the northern republic. Only in a very vague sense were they related to Cuban independence or dramatic popular betterment.²

The revolution of 1868–1878, usually known as the “Guerra Grande” or the Ten Years’ War, was something quite different. From its events one can clearly date a revolutionary tradition within Cuban arms that carries on, with one very long pause indeed to our own time. There are elements in the makeup of the *Mambí* army of that war that were truly revolutionary. When defeat came Cubans lived the long truce of 17 years, when ideas of compromise with Spain,

autonomy, and the "Canadian solution" became dominant in the political discourse of the time.³

By the next war in 1895, when frustrations with broken Spanish promises had become overpowering, there had been a transformation in the thinking of the majority of Cubans.⁴ It was ever clearer that reform was impossible with the Spanish government of the time and that violent revolution was the only way to get real change. Under the impact of the social and political thinking of José Martí, a Cuban Revolutionary Party was formed in exile in 1892. While there were doubtless many conservatives in its ranks, Martí's influence was such, and such was the perceived need for change, that the Party soon advocated a transformation of Cuban society through revolution.⁵

Both the new Liberation Army founded by Máximo Gómez, Antonio Maceo, and other leaders in 1895, and the platform of the Party, reflected the desire for this change. The racial and class makeup of the army showed the extent of the acceptance of the proposals for meaningful reform. If Martí had his way there was little doubt that real revolution was coming.⁶ Meaningful change was, of course, stymied by the length and destruction of the war, the intervention of the United States, the occupation by the U.S. army of the island for four crucial years, and the nature of the regime set up in its wake. Much has been written on those years, and how they marked what Cubans now call the "pseudo-republic." But however much of a grain of salt must be taken with such characterizations, the regime broke absolutely with the idea of a revolutionary army reflecting all of society and in the service of a transforming ideal. Instead a rural guard and an army were fashioned whose aim was the maintenance of a social and economic status quo, little changed since the colony.⁷

This state of affairs was shattered by the tiny but immensely motivated "army" of Fidel Castro who, after three years of failures, finally landed in 1956 a small force near the remote eastern Sierra Maestra. He then began a guerrilla campaign of startling success, which culminated in the defeat of the dictator's corrupt army and the establishment of a vigorously revolutionary government. From the beginning Fidel claimed a direct link with the *Mambí* tradition, betrayed by those who in his view had sold out the revolutions of those years in order to retain the old order.

Geography and Defense

It may seem odd to spend some pages discussing the colonial past of the Cuban armed forces. But a number of elements of that past play a part in the revolutionary traditions which have made the FAR what

they are today. The history of Cuban defense is of course the story of an island. *Cuba insula est*. The island status of the land in which lived the native peoples before Columbus, and the Spaniards and then Cubans who inhabited it later, marked every element of local life including defense.

The “Pearl of the Antilles” stretches from just off the Yucatán coast of Caribbean Mexico to just facing the Strait dividing it from Hispaniola, the eastern island where one now finds Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Its 1,100 km east–west mass dominates the northern Caribbean, whereas its very slim north–south dimensions make it possible at several points to see both the northern and southern seas from high points of vantage. Even more dramatic are the short distances that separate Cuba from its neighbors. From Maisí Point, the easternmost point in the country, one can see the mountains of the Saint-Nicholas chain in Haiti. Likewise from slopes in the Sierra Maestra, one can make out Jamaica’s Blue Mountains. And Wolf Cay in the Bahamas can be seen from Cuba’s small northern island of Cayo Confites.

Cuba is remarkably flat overall but has some mountains at both extremes as well as in the center. In the east, the Sierra Maestra dominates the south of today’s easternmost provinces, whereas in the west the smaller range of the Mogotes are found in the north of Pinar del Rio. In the center one finds the Sierra del Escambray. Rivers are not numerous and few are navigable over long distances. The coastal zones vary between beach areas such as Varadero through rocky outgrowths to swamps such as the Ciénaga de Zapata between Matanzas and Cienfuegos.

Cuba’s climate is subtropical with a long wet season stretching from May until September, a hurricane season from October to December, which crosses into the dry season from November until May. During the wet season heavy rainfall occurs most afternoons, although the rest of the day tends to be sunny. In the dry season rain is rare. The south coast can be considerably hotter than the north, and droughts are frequent. Natural vegetation is varied. Many types of plants exist on the island and trees are of particularly numerous species. Columbus was himself astounded by the depth of the green he found on arrival at the island in October 1492.⁸ Near jungle areas in the east contrast with the dry plains of Camagüey in the center with a variety of flora amply demonstrating the contrast.

The Colonial Cuban Military Tradition before 1868

Very little is actually known about the native peoples inhabiting Cuba at the time of the Conquest. There is general agreement that the

Arawaks, widely distributed throughout the region for many centuries, had recently been joined by the Caribs, the people who gave the local sea its name. When Diego Velázquez led an expedition to establish Spanish control in 1516, he found essentially what Columbus had in 1492—a small population dedicated to agriculture and fishing. Most historians tend to put the total figure at about 25,000 while some accept figures of 60,000 or even 112,000.⁹

Velázquez's campaign of conquest seems to have been resisted heroically, if ineffectively, by the natives principally under their famous chieftain Hatuey. Even today this leader is considered a hero of Cuban history and an example of self-sacrifice and courage worthy of emulation. He was burned at the stake as a result of his leadership of the resistance and the native populations were soon and easily subjugated and the island brought firmly under Spanish rule.

Cuban "Indians" disappeared over the next century, but most through assimilation with arriving Spaniards and even with black slaves brought soon to the island, as well as through the usual suicides, new diseases, poor food, harsh working conditions, and disruption that accompanied the new rulers virtually wherever they went in America.¹⁰ In addition, there was doubtless plenty of slaughter but not on the scale seen on the continent.¹¹ But disappear they did and there are today very few traces indeed of their ever having been on the island.

This emphasizes that conquest was relatively easy. Never after the very first years were Spanish settlers to be troubled by the fear of Indian revolts by a vast native population as in some colonies. The fear instead was of pirates and corsairs, and it was to these that the first "Cuban" defense efforts were aimed. The harbor at Havana was only too tempting being a final assembly point for the "flota," the vast naval undertaking that annually took the gold and silver of the "Indies" to its new owners. Ships coming north from Peru, then from Cartagena de Indias, as well as those from Mexico, could wait in Havana for the naval convoys that would try to protect them against marauders in peace and naval assault in wartime on their move to Spain. The sailors' hosting was the first stimulus to real Cuban economic development.¹²

Spain, penny-pinching as usual in the colonies, needed to raise most of the local defense force from its inhabitants. The few "vecinos" (settlers) were obliged to supplement the tiny imperial garrison for the defense of the capital and the island's exposed coastal cities. Military service was thus from early on compulsory. All white subjects of the Crown were obliged to serve, but they certainly had a direct incentive to do so. For defeat by pirates or corsairs could prove deadly to more than just those killed in battle. Exactions were often ferocious

and settlers fought hard and often well to defend their wealth and families as well as the rights of their King.¹³ Havana was taken and sacked three times. Santiago knew a similar fate. Even remote and inland Puerto Príncipe (Camagüey today) was attacked. Under such circumstances, settlers in Cuba became accustomed to armed service, to lending their slaves to build defense works, to paying extra taxes, and to taking Spanish troops into their homes. Defense was thus far from a distant thing for the early white inhabitants of the island. Everyone had to lend a hand or defeat was certain.¹⁴

The eighteenth century saw much less corsair and piratical activity, especially as a result of the accords of the end of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713. On the other hand, the astounding growth in British naval power of the time meant that the Spanish Empire in the Americas was to be less not more secure during this century. Nothing of the nature of the 1762 attack on Havana had, however, been attempted before, and it formed part of William Pitt's successful policy of serious imperial expansion during the Seven Years' War. Indeed, in many ways its 44-day siege and spectacular capture was the crowning glory of the war for London.

For our purposes the importance of the event was in its use of militia forces in support of Spanish regulars in the defense of Havana.¹⁵ Cuban militiamen were often criticized by Spaniards from the regular forces, but it is clear that they often did a very good job indeed in harassing the British occupation forces, and although not good in open warfare against British regulars, they were powerful foes when fighting under guerrilla conditions.¹⁶ Thus the Cuban guerrilla tradition was born with characters such as José Antonio Gómez y Bullones (known to virtually all Cubans as "Pepe Antonio"), Luis de Aguiar, Agustín de Cárdenas, Lauriano Chacón, and many others as heroes of a Spanish and royalist Cuba, but one able to produce determined fighters even against considerable odds. It is interesting to note that as in later wars in Cuban history many militiamen of the time were blacks or mulattos, often promised their liberty in return for their fighting for the Spanish.¹⁷ The militia, as in the rest of Spanish America, was to be given much more priority during the following decades, and the Cuban militia forces were to be particularly expanded and better trained.¹⁸ Spain was to make war on Napoleonic France, finally on the side of Great Britain, from 1808 until 1815. This meant that the empire was at last free from the fear of British naval attack. But these relatively few years of the British alliance were hardly ones of momentous successes for Spanish arms. These saw a massive level of popular resistance in the peninsula to the French occupation army, an effort supported by a British expeditionary force

under the command of the future Duke of Wellington. But Spain would only be completely free in 1814. Thus the mother country was in a weak position indeed to influence events in its far-flung empire.

Spanish America was remarkably stable at the time of the French coup against the monarchy of the Bourbons in Madrid.¹⁹ Even though the empire had undoubtedly been quite shaken by the Túpac Amaru revolt in Peru two decades earlier, the longer-term results of that rebellion may have been to secure, rather than weaken, the links between mother country and overseas territories.²⁰ Colonial white populations saw the continuing value of having a still relatively powerful mother country capable of deploying significant military force in defense of a status quo highly favorable to them and perhaps essential in ensuring their safety as well as their prosperity and control of local territories. Such considerations would be far from absent in Cuban contemplation of independence in the decades to follow.

Napoleon's abduction of the King and occupation of Spain shocked all of Spanish America. The empire was quite literally decapitated with its king sequestered, its institutions handed over to an occupying power, and a foreign, immensely powerful dynasty on its throne. The reaction was an explosion of Spanish American loyalty to the king and the religion that linked all its parts. With time, however, the majority of Spain's territories declared independence. Local elites took the place of the often-hated *peninsulares* and enjoyed the new power they could use almost as they liked given Madrid's prostration. But civil wars raged more than revolutions. Royalist power locally was very difficult indeed to defeat even when left virtually unsupported by Madrid.²¹ Loyalty to the King was far from gone in the overseas empire and the elements of local populations of less wealth or power were frequently greatly worried about rule by their own elites unbridled by a Spanish monarchy, which, for all its sins, at least occasionally attempted to improve their lot.²² In this context it is hardly surprising to see the Antilles possessions little anxious to move quickly to independence. There was little push and even less pull to do so at this time and so Cuba remained the "siempre fiel" ("always loyal").

What was special about Cuba in the context of all this political effervescence? Why was it that the contagion from New Granada (Colombia) especially, but also to some extent from Mexico, did not spread to the island? In terms of this book's objectives, why was Cuban defense oriented to defending the empire instead of fighting to get one's independence from it? The answers are not obvious. The island was simply not facing the same conditions as the continental colonies where rebellion seemed a real option. In the first place, the economy was booming and landholders and those profiting from

the sugar boom were hardly interested in risky ventures like independence. The collapse at the end of the eighteenth century of France's stupendously prosperous sugar colony of Saint Domingue (Haiti) in a bloodbath of massive proportions meant that Cuban sugar production could now really take off.

In addition, at least some colonial reforms, the social context of the island, and the nature of an island base of Spain housing a significant garrison all contributed to a very different view of future options between the elites of the continent and Cuba's.²³ The Cuban slave holding aristocracy was fearful both of independence and reform. Revolutionary ideas brought to the island might bring about the sort of revolution just seen in Haiti. This could not be countenanced.²⁴ In addition, Havana was the most fortified city in the Americas and had a significant garrison of Spanish regulars even in times of rebellions in the empire and the crisis at home.²⁵ Even after Trafalgar, some construction and repair of warships continued and employed a major portion of the active working class of the city.²⁶ The organization of the militia after the British invasion had also continued and provided a further deterrent element where separatist sentiment was concerned. Havana also remained a very Spanish city with an upper class not only closely linked to Spain in ideological terms but also attached to that country through trade, continuing immigration, investment, race, language, and culture.²⁷ To this were added many royalists fleeing disorder in the new states rising out of the ashes of the old empire. Cuba was not only the largest welcoming place for them, but also the one which offered a developed society no other could match.²⁸

It must be said that at the same time Cuba was enjoying prosperity, war on the continent ensured a garrison in many Cuban ports and forts that needed all manner of sustenance. The Havana naval arsenal, founded in 1732 and going strong for the whole of the eighteenth century, continued in business stimulating not only Havana but also much of the interior.²⁹ Cuban corsairs, under the Spanish flag, were busy fighting the new national flag ships of Mexico and particularly Colombia.³⁰ The war stimulated almost all types of business. Cuba was doing very well out of the conflict and this meant that there was little push for independence.

Even when victory on the continent eventually belonged to the rebels Cuba was little affected. Small-scale schemes hatched to free the island came to little. Neither Mexico nor Colombia considered such objectives vital in the light of their own domestic struggles after independence. And the nature of the Cuban situation seemed to offer few chances of a successful call on local elements to rise up in support of expeditionary forces coming from abroad.³¹ There were, however,

several conspiracies aimed at liberating the country or at least its slaves. These risings were followed by brutal repression that sent a clear message to those anxious for reform.³²

Expeditions from abroad did, however, occasionally land. They were, on the other hand, rarely linked to any real idea of national independence, but rather were generally part of the growing popularity of the idea of annexation to the United States. That country had for long had its eye on Cuba, anxious to incorporate it into the Union or at least ensure that if it were to continue as a colony, that it did so under a weak empire such as Spain's rather than a strident one such as Britain's. As Secretary of State James Buchanan wrote to Washington Irving in 1848, British control of Cuba would be "ruinous" for U.S. commerce and possibly pose a danger for the Union itself.³³ The most famous of these expeditions involving the island was that of Narciso López, an adventurer who made a daring raid on the island in early 1850. Raising a second expedition of 450 men in the United States (typical of such of expeditions, only 49 were Cubans), he struck again in August.³⁴ López actually believed that this time the Cubans would rise in support of his force. Nothing of the sort occurred and he was defeated, most of his men taken prisoner and shot, and their leader garrotted. Meanwhile the landed classes continued to enjoy a stability unknown in the vast majority of now independent Spanish-speaking America. No part of that region then knew peace and only colonial Puerto Rico and Cuba could claim to be generally stable over these decades. Rule from Madrid was nonetheless increasingly absurd and the return of absolutism meant that the dreams of autonomy and constitutional monarchy disappeared. Cuba was able to get and keep few of the trade and tax reforms it needed for rapid development and disappointment with Spain grew.³⁵ And the spectacular growth of the neighboring United States, in and of itself but also as a market for Cuban products, meant that the temptation of a closer, unrestricted relationship with that country grew steadily more interesting to many Cubans.

The Ten Years' War

After these smaller plots, the Ten Years' War justifiably won its title of "la guerra grande." Spain's inability to develop a workable Cuba policy was evident.³⁶ Shorn of its American territories, Spain still held colonies in the Caribbean (Cuba and Puerto Rico), the Pacific (Samoa and the Philippines), and in Africa. All went by the twentieth century and although external factors would play a role, Madrid's own internal crises, and its total misunderstanding of the need for reform, were the keys to the disaster.

In Cuba the slavery issue continued to dominate political matters. British pressure to abandon the practice was of course great and London had for long enjoyed the privilege of having inspectors in Cuba checking on the trade.³⁷ Opinion among intellectuals and the middle class of the cities in Cuba itself, as in Spain, was increasingly abolitionist. But a sugar industry without slavery still appeared impossible to experts on the subject.³⁸ As the 1860s advanced coups, civil war, and parliamentary instability plagued Spain and made abolition of slavery in Cuba, and indeed anything on that island other than revenue generation, seem far from a priority. That weakness also appeared as an opportunity for the island's disaffected population, suffering from economic downturn especially in Oriente.³⁹ On October 10, 1868 a leading member of the aristocracy in the west of that province, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, harangued locals and called on them to rise in arms. This was part of a conspiracy involving elements not only in much of the eastern province, but also in Puerto Principe. Risings occurred in other parts of the east but the timing of the revolt had already gone wrong. This caused divisions which marked the whole war, and largely permitted the Spanish to crush the rebellion a decade later.

Despite these difficulties the rising spread. The government's reaction was swift but far from panicky. On October 12, Captain-General Francisco Lersundi dispatched reinforcements from Havana while local forces tried to nip the rising in the bud. But two royalist columns were stopped dead by the insurgents, one involving the first of many machete charges for which the Cubans were to become justly famous. These two defeats, combined with the surrender of Bayamo, an important town, caused real alarm. Blas de Vilarte, Count Valmaseda and second-in-command in Cuba, was named on November 8 operational commander in a campaign to destroy the insurgency quickly. But the myth of Cuban guerrilla prowess had been born again and this time the guerrillas were fighting for "Cuba Libre."

The rising on November 4 of rebels in Puerto Principe meant, however, that not only had the insurrection spread but also that a quick counterinsurgency campaign was unlikely. Instead, a steady march of significant forces would be needed to suppress the insurgents. There was now, in fact, a real "Cuba Libre," a zone free of Spanish control which, if not large, was becoming organized as the "Republic in Arms." But whereas the Cuban insurrection counted on impressive official support from governments and individuals in much of Latin America, and from many individuals in nearby British colonies and the United States, it had little real financial support and faced the consistent opposition of the U.S. government, itself

involved in post-civil war complications over issues of foreign involvement in domestic conflict.⁴⁰ Valmaseda began his offensive in earnest against both the Camagüey and Oriente rebels with 2,000 men and four guns setting out for the insurrectionist zones of the east. Facing him was a mixed bag of tested and untested commanders and a large number of still largely untried troops. Command in the insurgent army was largely a function of whom one could recruit. Céspedes did not dare undo arrangements made locally so that his officers, usually giving themselves high rank, began to operate without much central control.

Insurgent generals Donato Mármol and Vicente García were able to put up a tough showing. The former's second in command was the Dominican Máximo Gómez, who was to prove indispensable to the rebel cause for the next thirty years. They showed themselves at this time to be active commanders of considerable initiative. Cuba was developing military leadership of a special kind. But Valmaseda, assisted by the intervention of a further column of some 700 men, pushed on. And while Mármol took on the job of stopping the Spaniards, the latter completely outmaneuvered him and forced him into a kind of static warfare completely unfamiliar to the Cubans.

The rebels could deploy to stop the Spanish a reasonably numerous force of perhaps just over 2,300 men. But other than some 300 of these who had firearms of all types and very little ammunition for them, the rest were armed with pikes or machetes. Thus, while knowledge of the country doubtless helped the rebels, the Spanish continued to keep the insurgents off balance and then soundly beat them. At this early stage of the war the Cubans had proven themselves excessively divided along regional lines, even within the chain of command, an issue of vast importance later on in the war. They had also not used their potential for rapid and effective access to intelligence on the enemy to the full. The "army" clearly needed to become more professional and much better armed. Accusations flew among the commanders as to who was responsible for this defeat. In addition, the poor static defense capabilities of the rebels had been shown. It would be necessary not only to carry a revolutionary message but also to use revolutionary tactics and strategy as well.

Valmaseda now continued his advance on the rebel capital. The insurgents knew that they could not hold such a large town, utterly unprepared for defense against a real enemy with artillery. The command was so shaken and divided that no effective further defense was offered to the Spanish. The decision was taken to burn Bayamo to the ground to anchor the insurrection through a dramatic act. But from then on the insurgents never held a major town. The war now shifted

to a phase that was to dominate it for nearly eight years. In the eastern provinces of Camagüey and Oriente the towns were held by the Spanish but the countryside was often in effect either actually in rebel hands or at least pro-insurgent. There the Spanish rarely went on the offensive and waited for events to the west, where the war barely existed, to permit more decisive operations in this inhospitable context.

The war boiled down mostly to attacks on Spanish columns, which were either seeking to revictual outlying garrisons and towns or were actually seeking combat with the rebels. In this context the Cubans showed the rapidly developing skills of a truly superb guerrilla cavalry, armed with the dreaded machete of sugar-cutting fame, but modified for combat, and in Camagüey at least trained and led by the exceptional commander Ignacio Agramonte.⁴¹ Repeatedly this cavalry, although formally outnumbered by the combination of infantry and cavalry deployed by Spanish columns, bested the enemy. A combination of tactical skill and initiative was added to what was often desperation (the rebel army lacking everything, even food) to produce surprise after surprise for the Spanish whose columns, almost always low on cavalry, generally ended up on the defensive and while only rarely destroyed, were usually left having lost the day. There were two exceptions to this rather desultory warfare. One was a truly significant battle. The other was the "invasion."

The largest battle of the war took place in March 1874 south of Puerto Príncipe at Las Guásimas. There a 4,000 strong Spanish column fell into the kind of trap that had by then become a hallmark of Máximo Gómez' tactics and for which they had failed to find a response. Having first placed his troops in a superb ambush position, he moved a small force of his cavalry along a road, which would inevitably lead them into the Spanish cavalry vanguard. As expected by Gómez, the Spanish could not resist completing the business after their larger numbers allowed them to quickly get the upper hand in fighting with the small rebel cavalry force. The Spanish pursuit of the Cubans brought them ever deeper into the area where the Cubans awaited them. The Spanish rapidly found themselves surrounded because although the Cubans were less numerous with only rather more than 3,000 men, the bulk of these were cavalry in a region of plains and gently rolling hills, perfect cavalry country. For four days the Spanish fought a desperate action. The royalists suffered terribly but such was their firepower that the Cubans could not complete the work of the column's destruction. On the fourth day a relief column allowed the survivors to limp off back to town. Spanish casualties had been heavy—perhaps over a thousand in dead and wounded.⁴² The Cuban insurgents had suffered as well with nearly half that

number, but in their case more serious was the heavy expenditure of ammunition.

Even more important than this largest battle of Cuban history was the attempt at an "invasion" of western Cuba. In Cuban military history "The Invasion" is the successful campaign of Máximo Gómez and his second-in-command Antonio Maceo ("The Titan of Bronze") in 1895 during the later war for independence. But the same thing was tried with no such success in the Ten Years' War. The Spanish were to build for both wars a series of "trochas" or trench lines to cut off strategic regions from the rebel forces. The most important of these cut the island literally in two between the southern fishing village of Júcaro and the prosperous northern port of Morón. Into this trench line the Spanish poured troops. Some 65 km in length, the line separated the poorer and less developed East from the much more prosperous West. Gómez understood well that only by crossing that line and carrying the war to those areas of wealth which made possible Spanish control could the war be won.⁴³

Interneccine squabbling between regional commanders, as well as other political issues and the inherent difficulties of the task for a small rebel army, led to little in this regard during this war. Small rebel forces were able to cross the "trocha" without much trouble but their subsequent activities in no real way troubled Spanish rule in the West. They were neither strong enough nor ruthless enough to exploit their success. And crucial too was the fact that the Center and West of the island were happier with their lot than was the East.⁴⁴

The war ended after an exceptional Spanish commander-in-chief, General Arsenio Martínez Campos was called in as Captain-General. He used a peace policy to great effect in combination with major offensive military operations over the last two years of the war. Prisoners were treated well rather than being considered traitors and shot as was often the practice earlier. Generous terms for surrender were offered. Disunity among the rebels though, as already alluded to, was just as important as successful Spanish diplomacy and military operations. Vicente García led in 1875 what can only be called a mutiny against Máximo Gómez and local commanders continued to have many grievances that held back any type of truly coordinated campaign plan. Racial issues surfaced constantly with black and mulatto commanders, doubtless representing the majority racial group within the *mambises*, being treated with less than due respect and with many white officers and men unwilling to serve under them with proper loyalty and subordination. By 1878, barring some slight resistance under the recalcitrant Maceo, the war was over and the rebels disbanded. A further outbreak of violence brought little but frustration to the separatist cause.

Cubans had, however, achieved a great deal. Whites and blacks had served together as Cubans and had shown the Spanish what they could do as a military force. Madrid had needed a capable commander, overwhelming numbers, a shrewd and generous peace policy, the promise of political concessions, and rebel disunity to bring about an end to a long, costly, and often ferocious war. The rebels had not only formed a significant fighting force, but also had found leaders of great value to command it. And the guerrilla tradition had been given a huge boost.

Given the conservatives in the rebel ranks, the revolutionary nature of the independence proposal had been less than clear. The Spanish had touted the movement as merely annexationist (or as simple banditry or race war) and there were certainly many annexationists and even bandits in it. Many more native-born Cubans served in the ranks of the government forces than with the rebels, as Gómez and Maceo were to complain.⁴⁵ But the eventual declaration of freedom for the slaves, at least in principle, did show some revolutionary tendencies. And the mere fact that the rebels were of black and mulatto majority ensured both the revolutionary nature of the events and the rejection of their cause by most white Cubans.⁴⁶ Cuba now had its first real revolutionary traditions and there is little wonder that the Ten Years' War remains a benchmark for the "revolutionary" armed forces of our own era.

The War of Independence 1895–1898

The truce of 1878–1895 saw reformist attempts to keep Cuba within the empire dashed through Spanish misgovernment. The reformists had an absolutely dominant upper hand in Cuba and the destruction of the recent war had convinced almost all Cubans that a compromise solution short of independence had to be found. The war ended with Martínez Campos guaranteeing just such a compromise, almost certainly along lines of the "Canadian solution" mentioned above. Those desires in Havana were not well represented in Madrid, or in local absolutist circles where reformists were considered traitors and thought to be merely hiding behind the cloak of reform while they prepared "separación." By the early 1890s, another revolutionary war seemed inevitable and by 1892 Martí was calling for the "guerra necesaria."⁴⁷

In February 1895, rebellion broke out again in Oriente, but it seemed far from threatening, and only the arrival of Martí, Gómez, Maceo, and other local leaders from the previous war, later breathed life into the affair. The Spanish quickly named Martínez Campos again to command, but this was too little too late. Even he felt that

Spain's failure to back up his promises of reform with action in the intervening 17 years made futile any attempt to again reduce the island to obedience.⁴⁸ By the end of the year the "Invasion" of the west of the country was a fact, with the previous war's "trocha" crossed successfully. In addition, Gómez insisted, especially after the gentle Martí was killed in May, that a "strategy of the torch" be applied in order to deprive the Spanish and their conservative allies of the resources they needed to maintain imperial rule. Here was revolution indeed and the Martí's PRC was rocked by its implications. At the same time much greater unity among commanders was achieved, the rebels learning finally one of the key lessons of the previous conflict.

Equally important perhaps was the increasing number of whites serving alongside their black and mulatto compatriots in this conflict. Many more of the latter reached officer rank in this war. And the "invasion" proved to many Westerners resistant to the rebellion that the rebel army was not merely a gang of black looters as it was painted by the Spanish propaganda machine. Thus, recruiting in Pinar del Rio, Matanzas, Las Villas and even Havana soared to previously unknown heights as real doubt as to Spain's ability to hold on to the colony spread.⁴⁹

Only the naming of General Weyler as Captain-General in 1896 brought new life into the Spanish war effort. His policy of savage "reconcentration"⁵⁰ of rural populations cost many thousands (perhaps hundreds of thousands) of lives and brought neutrals in Cuba massively onto the rebel side. But it did throw the rebels into confusion, deprive them of recruits, and put them on the defensive. Nonetheless, the war could not be won by Spain. The debate still rages in Cuba as to whether the U.S. intervention in the war in the spring of 1898 was vital if the island was to achieve independence. Nationalists say the war was to all intents won and Spain could not carry on.⁵¹ Others say that the rebels no longer had the wherewithal to make anything like a final decisive push. In any case the United States defeated the Spanish smartly at sea outside Santiago harbor. While land successes were less impressive Santiago did finally fall. Spain ceded the island, as well as its Pacific possessions and Puerto Rico, to the United States on January 1, 1899. While the political effects of the war included, doubtless, that the revolutionary tradition was now truly anchored in Cuba, it was also the case that it was the regular forces of the United States that had finally won the independence war against Spain. This latter fact has, of course, conditioned Cuban history to this day and in no institution has it had such an impact as in the FAR.

The U.S. Occupation and the Rural Guard

The United States thus found itself in charge of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and the Mariana Islands when war ended. What to do with all these territories was far from obvious. Many statesmen, journalists, and military men had been speaking of the need to acquire at least some of these places for a long time, in the case of Cuba for almost a century. But the political context of 1898 brought with it very special conditions where their incorporation into an American "empire" was concerned. Cuba was an especially thorny issue. The island was seen by many Americans as essential for national security and the projection of U.S. interests into Latin America. After the Bahamas, it was the closest foreign island to U.S. shores, lying a mere 90 miles from Key West in Florida. U.S. investments in the island were massive. And U.S. trade relations with the country were among the most developed for all Latin America. Many U.S. citizens were likewise residents of Cuba and many Cubans resided in the United States. Thus, the linkages were significant indeed.⁵²

The island was also, of course, the *casus belli* for the war, hardly a small point. Major elements of the U.S. government and occupying forces wished openly for the incorporation of the island into the United States or at least its transformation into a U.S. colony. General Leonard Wood, the governor of Oriente Province, was outspoken in his support for annexation. When he was named to replace General John Brooke as governor of the whole island, this was seen by many as a clear indication that the government was becoming more convinced of the need to follow that course.⁵³

Many of the Spanish integrationists of earlier times now saw no reason to accept the idea of a new Cuban republic. In addition, their investments would clearly be much safer inside the Union than they would be at the mercy of what they saw as a government of blacks, mulattoes, and upstart criollos. Many criollos also felt that annexation would lead to great prosperity and would bring peace and modernity as well as a proper context for handling the racial issue.

The masses seemed to think little of these approaches, however. Nationalist meetings were thronged whenever they took place, even in conservative Havana. Even more importantly, the revolutionary army was restless. The U.S. administration of the island was at pains to ensure that nothing was ever said or done that would acknowledge the existence of a Cuban state, "nation," or even "people." This was not lost on the officers of the former insurgents, the future of whose troops was also hotly debated.⁵⁴ There were still tens of thousands of Cubans under arms well after the peace was signed and insecurity was

widespread in a country where wartime destruction had been massive, given the insurgent policy of the “tea” (putting the torch to property), the Spanish policy of “reconcentration,” and the impact of the U.S. invasion. U.S. authorities were above all anxious to diffuse any possibility of frustration, most particularly among armed insurgents, leading to fighting on the Philippine model. U.S. casualties in that country were rising at an alarming, and unpopular, rate. And Cuban troops were better armed, more organized, and numerous, and more visible to the U.S. press, as well as probably better led, than were their Philippine counterparts. Cuban frustration was growing. The shoddy treatment of the military leadership of the *Mambi* army was echoed by that given to the Cuban revolutionary government. Neither the Commander-in-Chief nor the Counsel of Government had ever been given any official recognition by the U.S. authorities. From the Liberation Army’s perspective this had gone on long enough and the time had come for the Americans to hand over the country and leave. Neither the government nor the army had asked the United States to intervene. The latter had now done so. In their view, Spain had been beaten largely as a result of Cuban efforts. Thus, there was neither a moral nor a political basis for the continuation of U.S. troops and administration on Cuban soil.

In the early months of the new war and the occupation that quickly followed it, an understanding of the real political context facing Cuba seemed strangely lacking. At least Máximo Gómez appears to have suffered on occasion from *naïveté*. Having rejected Spanish Captain-General Ramón Blanco’s offer to put aside the then raging “civil war” in order to join forces to defeat the Americans, Gómez stressed that he did not feel Cubans belonged to the same race as the Spaniards and was certain that the Americans had only the best of intentions in helping Cuba gain its independence.

By October 1898, Gómez was singing an altogether different tune. In conversations with Colonel Orestes Ferrara, he said:

I am concerned and offended . . . what is going to happen to independence? The Americans, it would appear, are not considering it for the moment . . . And I see that if in the end, they give it to us, it will be as a gift, while we have won it for ourselves. The Americans have had an easy campaign because we had exhausted the Spanish in men and resources. I have to be grateful to the Americans but only if they keep their promise, and keep it in decency, without offending the Cuban. In the opposite case, I shall be their enemy as I have been of the Spanish.⁵⁵

The U.S. administration soon founded a new force, eventually to have the name of Rural Guard, with strict instructions as to limiting the

recruiting of blacks and mulattos, and although those restrictions were eventually softened somewhat, the new institution reflected U.S. military views of race common at the time.⁵⁶ The first elements were recruited in Oriente and were used in internal security duties and especially in suppressing banditry and other tasks that the U.S. occupiers did not wish to take on themselves. The dangers of such duties conducted by the U.S. troops, and the current U.S. Philippine experience, ensured this approach was chosen.⁵⁷

In other regions similar forces were organized, usually with a former Revolutionary Army officer as commander but answering to a central command entirely officered by U.S. personnel. In any case, as one author has put it, "those men were chosen who, if they were not actually annexationists, neither did they resist the idea."⁵⁸ And the link between the possibility of a job in an impoverished, war-torn Cuba (and one in the military field for *ex-mambises* who usually had few nonmilitary skills) and the degree of their acceptance of the new rules of the game in a U.S.-dominated Cuba were made obvious to all. These factors were to be crucial in the almost total loss of revolutionary traditions in the post-independence army and other security forces.⁵⁹ In any case, external defense remained firmly in the hands of the U.S. armed forces. Absolutely and perhaps inevitably closely linked with large land holders, cattle farmers, businesses, and the like, the Guard was soon seen as a force of repression by much of the rural community and as a force at the service of the occupying power by all.⁶⁰ But with racial tensions gaining steam in the years after the United States formally left the island on the occasion of the ending of the first occupation in 1902, it was reinforced. The rising of 1906, stimulated by what blacks could hardly see as anything other than betrayal after their role in the recent independence wars, spread rapidly in the east. The Rural Guard slaughtered thousands in what some see as the biggest bloodbath of Cuban history, larger than anything under Spain.⁶¹

Further U.S. intervention in 1909 led to the Rural Guard being placed again under U.S. command and reformed further in order to make it a guardian of the new order.⁶² There was little threat imaginable from abroad, the rest of the powers having accepted the U.S. rule as a good thing or at least as inevitable. Despite an attempt by some nationalists in the legislature and the Guard to purchase some artillery and other equipment from France, U.S. domination of the Guard remained absolute.⁶³

Cuba joined several other regional states in declaring war on Germany in 1917 alongside the United States, reflecting a status that needs little elaboration. This led to a decision to found a real army.

But weak, personalist, and divided from inception, the small force could not be changed, even with the beginning of professional preparation of officers, a first military academy graduation taking place in 1911.⁶⁴ This army, as well as the Rural Guard, were soon reflective of what came to be seen as the usual Latin American pattern of armed forces-interventionist in politics and self-seeking. Politicians in the new order sought their support in the political struggles that marked the pseudo-republic. And the army's senior officers followed loyalty patterns that were neither based on institutional nor on patriotic principles but were merely related to the personal linkages they had with key politicians of the day. Especially in the Machado era of the 1930s, and at its end in 1933, the army and its domestic difficulties emerged as central to Cuban political life.

It was in this context that Fulgencio Batista, an obscure clerical sergeant, rose in the ranks and became influential among his fellow NCOs. The historian Elvira Díaz Vallina no doubt captured the essence of this "soldier" when she called him "*sin batallas y sin academias*."⁶⁵ During the tumultuous events of the Machado dictatorship's fall in 1933, he made himself useful to a variety of factions eventually becoming "king maker" in his own right. A first period of his rule ended peacefully and he retired in the United States.

During World War II, Cuba sided again with the United States and again, automatically, during the conflict Cuban naval forces cooperated in the sinking of a German U-Boat, a subject of some pride to this day.⁶⁶ In addition, U.S. military missions and assistance remade the armed forces. Aircraft, ships, tanks, and a host of other weapons and vehicles were transferred to Cuba under the "Lend-Lease" arrangements for aiding allies in the war. The Cuban army became a much more professional force even if its political anties did not decline.

Troubles in the wake of the war, including widespread political violence centered on the University of Havana and its political groupings, opened the way for Batista's return with the support of segments of the armed forces loyal to him. In March 1952, a coup unseated the corrupt and unpopular government of President Carlos Prío Socarras which, for all its sins, had at least been elected in vaguely fair elections. The shock for the political system on the island could hardly have been greater.

It was in reaction to this move that Fidel Castro Ruz, an increasingly influential member of one of the political groups within the university and then a candidate in the very elections preempted by Batista's coup, began to plot seriously to bring about through violent means deep social, economic, and political change. The clearly idealistic young law student felt that the coup had finally put paid to schemes

aiming at peaceful change in the country and that the new regime's absolute illegality fully justified any kind of resistance to it. In this context, the armed resistance to the regime put in place in the years since the frustration of the independence wars began. The seeds of a revolutionary army were sewn at this time as Fidel Castro gathered around his person a series of radical students and others determined to effect a profound change in what they saw as the humiliating conditions of the "pseudo-republic."

Facing him was a regime that, while supported by the United States, was not really liked by Washington. In the context of a Good Neighbor Policy dating from the early 1930s, a recent war to defend democracy, and a "cold war" aimed at defending democratic principles against dictatorial communism; Batista was often an embarrassment. But he was good for business, comfortably in power, posed no threats to U.S. interests, and was increasingly firm in his opposition to his former communist allies.⁶⁷

His armed forces were, however, the true inheritors of the new regime set in place in 1898 and modified in the name of the defense of established interests since. The officer corps was venal, self-willed, and ill trained, engrossed in politics, corrupt, and shaken by internal strife. Its knowledge of modern tactics and strategy, despite the recent and continued addition of new equipment and weapons, and the constant attendance of its officers and senior NCOs at U.S. military schools; was slight. It was also an army with deep divisions from the start but exacerbated by the promotions given out lavishly to pro-Batista senior NCOs after the events of 1933, men who found little in common with officers commissioned later on especially those who went on to further education and training in the United States.⁶⁸ Trained until the very last for operations of a conventional or constabulary kind, and with equipment obtained with such operations in mind, this army did not have the mindset to undertake counter-insurgency operations. Uninterested in operating away from its barracks it was not accustomed to thinking or training that would permit it to effectively take the war to the rebels seizing the initiative on the way.⁶⁹ And it was this institution that was soon to find itself facing a national insurrection, the likes of which Cuba had not seen since independence.

Fidel Castro's Revolution

The Cuban Revolution of 1953–1959 eventually involved the active participation of thousands of citizens and the passive support of many thousands more. But the movement was in its very essence the creation of Fidel Castro Ruz. It was he who gave it meaning, leadership,

a platform of a kind, a direction, a military wing, coordination, a historical context, and a link with Cuba's revolutionary past. The *máximo líder* of the Cuban Revolution is and was just that, the highest leader, both in the organizational and military phases of the six-year struggle against Batista and of course in the many years since January 1959. Without him it is simply impossible to imagine the movement beginning, coalescing, operating, or succeeding.

Getting to know much about him, even as a military leader, is not an easy task. He has luxuriated in ambiguity about himself as a person, as a leader, and as a thinker. The best biography to date is that of Tad Szulz, but even that fine journalist was the first to admit that his "critical biography" only scratches the surface of a man determined that people would not discover his innermost secrets, and that all the benefits of personal mystery would accrue to him.

It is essential to mention some elements of this leader's past if one is to understand the armed forces forged by, and currently answering to him. For Fidel is a military man, a military leader, a military thinker.⁷⁰ And while those attributes have not dominated a person at the head of a complex government in an even more complex international and national situation, they have come to the fore repeatedly as various challenges have appeared in the organization of the new national army after 1959, in the "export" of revolution phase, in the Bay of Pigs fighting, to some extent in the 1962 Missile Crisis, in the African campaigns, and at other times of need.

In the view of this author it is Fidel as inheritor of the mythology of the Cuban revolutionary movements of old that has been so important in making him so central to the picture. As Louis Pérez, but especially Antoni Kapcia have shown, the Revolution of 1953-1959 responded to deep currents in Cuban history, to frustrations of previous revolutionary processes, the knowledge of which is simply essential to understand if one is to fathom what has gone on and why Fidel is still in charge of "his" phase of that revolutionary process.⁷¹

The son of a self-made Spanish landlord father and his Cuban wife, Fidel and his brother were raised in comfort in the north of Oriente province on a farm outside the village of Birán, near the town of Mayarí.⁷² He was then sent to school in Santiago, first to the Marianist Brothers' Colegio La Salle and then to the Colegio Dolores. From there he went to Havana, to the famous Jesuit school of Belén. The influences of this training were to leave a significant mark on him, some would say to this day. He was an avid sportsman, something of a tough, a keen student of those things he liked but often inattentive in studying things he found uninteresting. He was often ill disciplined, but was on several occasions singled out as having a future of

distinction based on his iron will as well as on his academic and physical capacities. Very important were his quickly developed interests in debating and his astounding memory. At university from October 1945 he became interested in the campus politics that so dominated those at the national level in the late 1940s and the early 1950s. Over those years he became known for the same determination shown at school. But to it he added a flair for public speaking, a passion for his country, a firm belief in the need for deep reform of the "system," a revulsion at Cuba's domination by the United States, and a fine skill at maneuvering among the university's dangerous and wily armed groups.

It is not clear when he began to interest himself in military affairs and history. It may well have been as his interest in Jose Martí grew. For Martí was his hero although he was no military man and his own death was at least in part the result of that lack of military sense. But he was able to call on the loyalty of impressive military men like Gómez and Maceo who, while often frustrated by his idealism, nonetheless felt a keen personal devotion to him.

Martí's ideas of liberalism, social justice, racial equality, and perhaps especially Cuban nationalism had an enormous impact on Fidel. Martí's death before he could have a full influence for good on the revolutionary process of 1895–1898 and the U.S. intervention Fidel felt to have been crucial in allowing those humiliations to take place. The strength and persistence of the social and economic arrangements of the colonial period equally dominated his thinking and his rapidly developed radicalism. That radicalism appeared to Fidel to be the only answer to structural flaws of such importance that they had halted the reform process of which Martí had dreamt and meant that Cuban "independence" had been born a sham and continued to be one.⁷³

By the time of the March 1952 coup Fidel was a lawyer gaining a reputation as a defender of the weak. As a member by then of the Orthodox Party he was well connected with the political system of the day.⁷⁴ But he had become part of one of the fringe groups that had hung on every word of the famous Orthodox firebrand Eduardo Chibás, himself recently killed by his own hand (perhaps accidentally), leaving the Party, in effect, leaderless. No one else seemed sufficiently shocked by the Batista coup to do much about it, and U.S. recognition of the new government pretty well sealed Cuba's fate. But Fidel soon had a small group of intensely opposed students, ex-students, or others around him in a movement determined to force Batista to hand over power to an elected government. Their first move, in what was to become classic Fidel style, was to be a dramatic one. They planned nothing less than a surprise assault on the army's largest facility in

Oriente, Santiago's sprawling Moncada Barracks, to be accompanied by smaller attacks elsewhere in that city and the rest of the province. On the morning of Sunday, July 26, the strike force moved off in private vehicles from its new secret base camp to launch the attack. Virtually from the beginning everything went wrong.

A diversionary attack on the military hospital did not get off the ground. The element of surprise was lost at the barrack's gate as suspicious personnel gave the alarm. Many of the "fidelistas" were killed in the fighting but many more died under torture while prisoners of the Batista forces in the barracks.⁷⁵ The slaughter continued for many hours until halted by an intervention by local clergy, informed that the killing was going on long after the "battle" was over.

Fidel and others were imprisoned and tried. The vigor and daring of the attack were the talk of Cuba. Fidel spoke in his own defense in the famous "History Will Absolve Me" speech where he argued that since the regime was illegal, resistance was perfectly proper and indeed obligatory under the constitution. Imprisoned on the Isle of Pines (since renamed the Island of Youth) with many followers, Fidel maintained an extraordinary system of communication with his sympathizers on the mainland and schemed for both his release and for the advance of the movement, now styled the "26 de Julio" after its ill-starred, but highly romantic and publicized, first action. His speech was published and gained him even more notoriety. His references to Martí and his ideas, his calls for deep reform of the political and economic structures of the time, and his clear desire to "re-make" the system on the island, struck chords with many frustrated by over half a century of virtually colonial status. And while the speech steered well clear of anything smacking of socialism, its concern for the masses, the forgotten countryside, the blacks, in short, for social justice as well as political, was new and shockingly revolutionary to a society such as Cuba's.⁷⁶

Deciding to leave for Mexico, Fidel carried on his struggle from that country, trying to build up an exile force there, while stimulating an urban resistance movement under his direction in Havana and other Cuban cities.⁷⁷ Fidel continued to find ways to distance himself from other past leaders, working from Mexico rather than the traditional exile centers Miami and New York, emphasizing the links with Latin America and not the United States and Europe, and gathering support from many circles.⁷⁸

He soon had a small but dedicated group of young people, bringing together elements of the disgruntled from many sectors. The recent overthrow of the democratic government of Guatemala by CIA-trained and organized rebels invading that country had ended

the continuing fiction of a Good Neighbor Policy still in effect. The cold war had now arrived with a vengeance and the Organization of American States was called in to give legitimacy, not for the last time, to the overthrow. The result was an explosion of frustration in many reformist circles throughout Latin America. With 20 years of Good Neighbor Policy from Washington, the left had really become quite pro-American, usually seeing the United States as fed up with dictatorship. And while this had been changing since the war it was still largely in place. But now it was clear that the United States would not countenance left-leaning reform even if minor and done by a democratic government if that reform would hurt U.S. economic interests or if it were connected in any way with elements who might be tagged "communist."⁷⁹

This context left reformists with two options: either to abandon the struggle for real reform in the region as simply impossible given the opposition of the United States and the strength of domestic elites; or to take arms against the system that did not allow legitimate opposition to bring about change. This produced fertile ground for Fidel Castro's rag-tag group. Ernesto "Che" Guevara and the Spanish civil war veteran Alberto Bayo, soon Castro's best military trainer, were among those brought into his fold under these new circumstances.

In November 1956, Fidel was ready to launch his next major project. It again was romantic and dramatic. He was to lead his 82 men and women to land on the southern coast of Oriente near the Sierra Maestra and begin a war against Batista. A diversionary attack elsewhere would serve to keep the army busy while the landing took place from the small yacht "Granma." This family vessel, far from new, was not intended to transport significant numbers of fighting men with all their matériel.⁸⁰ Yet with this small yacht the force sailed to the far eastern part of Cuba from the port of Tuxpán. The sailing was fraught with problems with most personnel seasick, the boat taking water at an alarming rate, and the arrival delayed. Things got still worse. The late arrival of the invasion party meant that the rising of Frank País, head of the movement in Oriente, was ahead of schedule and totally uncoordinated with the landing. Thus, instead of acting as a useful diversion while the "Granma" expeditionaries disembarked, the fighting merely served to heighten government awareness of impending trouble. Further disaster struck as soon as the boat arrived in Cuba. Beached offshore, the yacht let go the invaders in most unfortunate conditions at a point known as "Los Cayuelos," some two kilometers from the objective—Las Coloradas Beach. Batista forces were aware of what was up after the "Granma" was sighted by aircraft and a frigate patrolling offshore. Army patrols and aircraft descended on the

landing area. Fidel's troops were dispirited and most very ill after their long voyage and tended to become disoriented from the first.

Some 72 hours after the landing Batista's forces caught up with the struggling group at a place called Alegría de Pío. In a short battle the group was dispersed with heavy casualties during and after the fighting when many, as after the Moncada fighting, were killed after surrendering. But Fidel and two companions managed to find their way to temporary safety. Hiding successfully from patrols and aircraft, they survived and were able to make their way deep into the mountains. This became one of the famous "Fidel" stories as it appears that despite disaster heaped on disaster, Fidel kept his cool and indeed felt that now victory was inevitable.⁸¹

Slowly but surely others from the "Granma" group found their way to join Fidel. He nurtured the group, continued hard training, and recruited among the often highly disaffected peasantry. He was determined to move slowly but resolutely toward some at least minor military successes, which would raise morale and give the lie to government propaganda pronouncing him dead and his movement disbanded. From November 1956 until May 1957 his rebels worked hard, impressing local peasants, learning soldiering, and hardening themselves for the future.

The first small success was not long in coming. With meticulous care Fidel prepared an attack on the small army post at Uvero, on the coast at the foot of the Sierra. It was a minor combat but an important victory signaling the beginning of real military action in the region. Husbanding resources, moving more freely among the mountains, training his men while recruiting others, Fidel planned another stroke at Pino del Agua. A further victory in this small battle, particularly important because the authorities could not hide it from the public, brought higher morale and self-confidence to the still tiny force.⁸² This was classic insurgency.

The rebels were steadily extending "Cuba Libre." Several hamlets were now under their control and a provisional government of a sort was set up, immediately beginning educational and health programs that would over time become famous. With this encouragement both in the Escambray Mountains and in several cities the 26th of July Movement and the urban "Directorio Revolucionario" began operations.⁸³ In March 1958, new "fronts" were set up. In fact the term was a gigantic propaganda trick. The total force at Fidel's disposal was less than a couple of hundred men. But one public relations master-stroke followed another as he first paraded his forces several times past a visiting U.S. journalist, giving him the impression of great rebel strength. While he was speaking with Fidel runners came in constantly

with false reports of events across the supposedly broad range of rebel operations. The U.S. press was soon full of "information" about the strength and vigor of the rebel forces in the sierra and the huge challenge Batista was having in rooting them out.⁸⁴

The first of these small operational initiatives to be mounted and leave the home base area was termed the Segundo Frente Oriental (the Second Eastern Front) "Frank País." Command was given to Raúl Castro. The Third Front "Santiago de Cuba" was given to Juan Almeida and ordered to operate in the zone to the west of that capital, famed in revolutionary lore in Cuba. Thus the war, at least in theory, spread not only to the whole of the Sierra Maestra, but also to most of the rest of the province. And the cities saw raids and other operations aimed at showing the population, and the United States, that the rebellion was alive and well, and quite capable of giving the lie to Batista propaganda of a peaceful island fully accepting its political system.

The impressive failure of the general strike called for Cuban cities in April 1958 gave the government confidence to mount a major offensive against the *Ejército Rebelde* while, in their view, rebel morale was shaken and confidence in Fidel weak. Some fourteen battalions and seven independent companies were thrown into the Sierra Maestra against the insurgents' main front, by now hosting the famous "Radio Rebelde," and commanded by Fidel himself. By this time other fronts, commanded among others by the immensely popular Camilo Cienfuegos, were operational. And much to the government forces' surprise, the arrival of the offensive was greeted by a concentration of rebel troops of some importance.

On July 29 the fighting began in earnest at Santo Domingo. Despite tremendous inferiority in weapons, equipment, and perhaps especially manpower, the rebels moved with ease in the mountains and soon had the government army units in disarray. In a few days it was the rebels who were putting the pressure on the army and not the other way around. Combat in the battle that came to be known as El Jigüe resulted in the end of any thought of continuing the government offensive. Indeed, it was soon clear that what was happening was a Fidelista counterattack showing the full extent to which the government's army was already demoralized.⁸⁵ The events of those days in effect turned into a rebel offensive that would last until the end of the year and the decisive victory from which there would be no turning back.⁸⁶

New fronts were soon established in Oriente, Camagüey, and even in Pinar del Río. In a repetition of the famed "invasion" of 1895, Camilo Cienfuegos at the head of Column 1, named after Maceo, and Ernesto Guevara commanding Column 8 "Ciro Redondo" "invaded"

the western provinces in August. Many battles were fought over the next four months with the campaign culminating in Camilo's capture in December of the barracks at Yaguajay, also a historic site of the earlier revolutionary wars, and in the Battle of Santa Clara. In the latter city, "Che" dealt the government a powerful blow by defeating not only a major garrison and the troops sent to support it, but also by destroying an armored train dispatched with reinforcements aboard. This was romantic, and impressive, fighting taking place in the center-west of the country and showing that the capital could actually be attacked. And the Oriente campaign had moved on to the point that both Santiago and Guantánamo were in effect virtually encircled by the rebels. It is perhaps not surprising that the dictator should at this stage give up the fight and go into exile. The army was no longer a fighting force, sapped of what little morale it still had at the beginning of the summer. And elements of it were already working to remove Batista who as a result was off to an extremely well heeled retirement in Europe.

Chapter 2

The FAR up to the Special Period, 1959–1990: The Third World's Most Impressive Armed Force?

The small band of soldiers one sees in so many photographs marching down the Malecón (Havana's magnificent ocean drive) in early January 1959, or accompanying their *comandante* in his triumphal parade through the smaller cities of Cuba and finally Havana itself in that first week of the new era, does not look much like an army. Instead, its young and grimy ranks seem something of a ragtag affair. But the illusion is just that.

It is true that it had only bested an army that was corrupt and had lost most of its will to fight, and not the mighty Batista machine most observers at the time and some even to this day seem to find irresistible; but it had fought its way across Cuba against tremendous odds, and had earned the right to be called the “Ejército” Rebelde. In both word and deed, it saw itself as the successor force to the *mambises* of the previous century. And while ideas of where the revolution should now go were very mixed indeed, leadership was firm and the need to remake Cuba clear. Without being excessively romantic, it is possible, indeed necessary, to see this army as revolutionary in many aspects. Its highest leaders, if not all its commanders, wished to see the deepest of reform of the country and an end to what was almost universally perceived as a pseudo colonial status imposed by the United States.

Its rank and file were from all walks of life, and even if the members of the vital urban resistance, the Directorio Revolucionario, were mostly bourgeois or petit bourgeois, the army coming into the city over those days was mostly from the country.¹ Its leadership was middle class in origin but not its younger and most junior members.

Much nonsense has been written about this to date, and this fact should be firmly kept in mind when assessing subsequent events.

The Early Years of the FAR

The army of the dictatorship was quickly disbanded, its personnel dispersed, and some of its more notorious commanders executed. The insurgents became the armed forces of the republic. In addition to internal security and external defense roles, they were also to be active in national development tasks, not a new responsibility for a revolutionary force newly out of the Sierra Maestra. Most of the new leaders of the country were serving members of the “armed forces” whose energy, determination, zeal, and connections ensured them, and the institution they would transform, a striking position in the formative years of the revolutionary regime.²

In such circumstances, the rebel army had enormous advantages, which the leaders could use to solidify their extraordinarily strong position in the state. They had the moral ascendancy that victory over Batista's army brought them. In addition, they were clearly an army of the poor that had overcome great odds. They were likewise unassailable in their proven loyalty to the regime and to the key figure in it—Fidel Castro himself. Indeed, a major campaign to ensure loyalty was undertaken within the armed forces with mythmaking *de rigueur*.³ Frequently given key posts in education, the judicial system, land reform institutes, and the police, rebel officers and even NCOs soon brought the forces to preeminence.

Converting the moth-eaten army of the mountains into a professional force took time. Through Law 599, decreed in October 1959, the old ministry of defense was abolished along with the army, navy, air force, and Joint General Staff of the previous regime. By Law 600, decreed the same day, a new Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (*Ministerio de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias*—MINFAR) was established. The former services were replaced by the *Ejército Rebelde* (Rebel Army), the *Fuerza Aérea Rebelde* (Rebel Air Force), and the *Marina de Guerra Rebelde* (Rebel Navy), and the former National Police by the *Policía Nacional Revolucionaria* (National Revolutionary Police). In fact, these forces had existed and had even been using these new names since January. But now the changes were official.

The 28-year-old brother of Fidel, Raúl Castro, was named minister and took over formally three days later.⁴ All these institutional names essentially remain to this day, and one could say the same for Raúl as minister.⁵ Raúl had of course already been the creator and commander

of the Eastern Second Front in the island's most eastern mountains during the war. In that "front," there was a government in miniature with its own hospitals, administration, educational service, communications, workshops, and justice system, all of which was to stand Raúl in good stead with the diverse roles the FAR handled in the years to come and especially in the chillingly challenging days of the early Special Period. Since early January 1959, Raúl had been chief of the combined command of the forces working from the capital.

Raúl wasted no time. While protecting those in the old armed forces who came from humble backgrounds, the new FAR purged those guilty of supporting the old regime and announced a new vision. In his first public statement as minister, Raúl said, "We shall never be satisfied until through our organization and always counting on the irreplaceable collaboration of the people of Cuba, our country is able to make itself respected militarily by both the small and the powerful."⁶ He might have mentioned domestic opposition as well since the Agrarian Reform Law, already passed, was proving the seed for the first armed opposition to the new government. An arms purchasing mission was quickly sent to Western Europe, and soon communists in the movement were given important positions in the new forces.

The army was deeply divided on the subject of the proper role for the communists and only a serious purge was able to preserve order as the sharp move to the left began in earnest. Popular militias appeared to be the answer and these were soon established as a means not only to deter invasion but also to ensure that there was no possibility of successful counterrevolutionary activity among the Revolution's armed hosts. They were to offer great flexibility to the Castro government at various times in recent decades, since it proved possible to shift emphasis from the regular army to the militia or vice versa as it suited the government's political objectives.

In related moves, other revolutionary groupings of the Batista era were brought under the umbrella of the armed forces, politicized, and given further training. Radical reform rapidly produced an opposition to the revolutionary project at home in the form of small armed groups operating in various isolated zones. Early on, they were supported or even organized by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) but the CIA did not have to look far to find disenchanted Cubans, often enough from among the numerous former Batista elements now in the United States but increasingly among the many Cubans who felt the Revolution was going communist.⁷ Soon enough the much discussed and much more direct "foreign" threat was to appear in the form of the Bay of Pigs invasion of mid-April 1961.⁸

The prestige of the armed forces and even of the militia was already high, but great success in repelling the attack reinforced immeasurably the public's esteem.⁹ The elimination of small opposition groups in the Escambray shortly afterward also seemed to demonstrate the capabilities of the Revolution's key guardians, and especially the regulars. Slowly but surely the importance of the militia declined, a trend exacerbated by the 1963 decision to implement compulsory military service.

Settling In

The years after 1963 showed armed forces increasingly at home with wide responsibilities and a special position within the revolutionary state. With the government far from certain about which way to turn in terms of the organizational basis of the state, the armed forces ensured security against foreign and domestic opponents during the time needed to sort things out. Army officers expanded their roles in society even further moving on from agrarian reform to actual agricultural production and many other fields. While threats to the regime appeared to be diminishing, the budget and roles of the FAR were to be increasing.

Meanwhile, inspired by Raúl Castro, steady progress was made in creating an institutional linkage between the armed forces and the only other key pillar of the state—the Cuban Communist Party (CCP). Key individuals came to hold both Party and military positions of importance. The FAR seemed to have much the better of it. In most senses, the CCP was being subordinated to the military and not the reverse. Perhaps most important, there was to be only one chain of command, whatever increasingly influential Soviet practice seemed to suggest, and that chain was to be dominated by MINFAR, and not by the Party or its structures.

From 1962 to 1968, Cuban foreign and defense policy appeared to much of the world, including to the Soviet Union, as being dominated by the “export of revolution”; the thinking which suggested that the only way to answer U.S. attempts to isolate the new government in Havana was to try to overthrow those regimes in power in neighboring states that supported this U.S. policy. As mentioned elsewhere, the Cubans never called this phase any such thing; for them it was merely “active defense” in the face of a U.S.-led effort that included those Latin American states willing to take part in an effort to destabilize the new regime. Che Guevara was of course a key figure in this period, and only his death in 1967 allowed new trends to become dominant. The end of the export of revolution signaled the

possibility of an improvement of relations with the Soviet Union, which had shown little patience with the Cubans' ideas about encouraging revolution abroad, and this was to improve the armed forces' situation and standing immensely and quickly.¹⁰ Raúl Castro was instrumental in obtaining much more, and better, weapons and equipment from Moscow, and this did much to solidify his own position as leader of MINFAR.

The subsequent years, into the very early 1980s, were dominated by a drive to further professionalize the forces. This meant that Castro would have a powerful foreign policy tool in this period, one he was to use in dramatic fashion. Having accepted temporary defeat in Latin America by 1969, he was tempted, for a variety of reasons, to support liberation movements in Africa.¹¹ This was said to be a result of the debt Cuba owed Black Africa as a result of the slave trade and the contributions black troops had made to the independence struggle. Regardless of the truth underlying this assertion, it in addition reinforced Castro's prestige with black Cubans who were being incorporated into Cuban life in ways unimaginable before the Revolution. Already by 1975, significant Cuban troop levels were being maintained in Angola in light of the increasing intervention there of South African troops.¹² Later on in the decade, entanglements in Ethiopia likewise called for the deployment of up to 17,000 men in that distant country.¹³

The era of "internationalism" was upon Cuba with a vengeance. For whatever reasons, Havana proved prepared to pay a high price for supporting supposedly like-minded "reformist" regimes, especially in Africa; however, it must be said that on occasion Soviet gratitude for Cuba's actions seemed to have more than made up for the losses incurred. Indeed, there may be more than a little truth in the assertion that Castro was at this time proving to Washington that it could ignore the little country only at a cost and that Havana's "nuisance value," if nothing else, was considerable. The FAR, for the first time, had sustained battle experience abroad: on occasion against quite sophisticated armies such as that of South Africa, and it had proven itself a force to be reckoned with in military terms.¹⁴

With time, however, the political and economic costs of this policy of support for revolutionary causes around the world proved simply too great for Cuba to sustain. The isolation of the regime in the Americas, symbolized by even the usually understanding Canadian government cutting off assistance in 1976 as a result of Havana's involvement in Angola, was particularly galling and hurtful. And with the mid-1980s evolution of Soviet policy on these matters, Cuba got precious little out of such efforts as the years went by. Indeed,

Moscow was ever less interested in destabilizing its bilateral relationship with Washington by adventures of this sort in the Third World and thus pressures to desist were growing as were Cuba's own frustrations with foreign, especially some African, partners. Probably over 200,000 Cubans had at one time served in Angola, the Congo, Ethiopia, and Mozambique and some 2,000 of these had died in the effort. Little other than regional prestige could be shown for this loss, except in the combat preparedness and pride of the FAR.

Domestic issues added to this situation led to an increase in the relative importance of the reserve forces. Social mobilization regained prominence and the dominant strategic concept became what was termed "War of All the People." From its beginnings in 1980, this new defense stance has been more effectively approached than was the case with other attempts to tie together regulars and reserves in national defense schemes, a central theme of any Cuban effort at deterrence of its main potential enemy. This time MINFAR gave the idea its full support including assigning good officers and resources to make it work.

Initial urgency was given to the strategy's application through the increasingly negative attitude of the Carter administration during its last months in office. The rhetoric of president-elect and then president Ronald Reagan further raised the apparent stakes. The clear signals from Moscow that there would be little or no assistance from that quarter if Cuba were attacked by the United States stimulated thinking on how to act alone in defense of the Revolution.¹⁵ The conditions that made for the 1981 Mariel boatlift and its proof that a great many Cubans were not at all happy with the reality of the revolutionary experiment produced doubts about internal security. Things, in a word, did not look good for the defense of the Revolution.¹⁶

An additional sense of urgency was stimulated by the invasion of Grenada in the autumn of 1983 and by the U.S. role in the then raging Central American civil wars. The need to deter invasion was central to a key policy speech by Raúl Castro after the return of the bodies of 13 Cubans killed in the Grenada fighting. In the speech the Minister referred to the vital necessity of being able to wage total war against an invader as the only means available to deter him from attempting an attack.

Party and armed forces worked closely together to ensure that the reorganization went smoothly. A new system of defense zones was also established and the Party assisted MINFAR in setting it up. More women were recruited into the military as a result of the increased emphasis on truly national mobilization.

Fidel also waded into the reorganization. In answer to the question put by Tad Szulc in early 1984 as to whether he feared a U.S. invasion,

he gave as clear a vision of Cuba's view of the kind of deterrence it needed as any student could ask for:

We have made great efforts to strengthen our defenses. After Grenada, we have made even greater efforts. We are increasing considerably our defense and resistance capability, including the preparation of the people for a prolonged, indefinite war. . . . our deterrent is to make it impossible for this country to be occupied, for an occupation army to be able to maintain itself in our country. First, it would be very hard to occupy our country. But the occupation of our country would not be the end, but the beginning of a much harder and much more difficult war, in which we would be victorious sooner or later at an enormous cost.¹⁷

GTP, and indeed Cuban deterrence policy in general, is based on this. But the maintenance of the potential to carry on with such a strategy is not easy, especially in periods of crisis when the need is perhaps greater but the resources scarcer.

The FAR and the “Special Period”

Few countries were as hard hit by the events unleashed in 1989 in much of Eastern Europe as was Cuba. Shattered in the early 1960s by the total crippling of its overseas trade by the reactions of the United States to its reform program, Havana less than three decades later had to face an even more severe jolt in the form of the rapidly dismantled assistance arrangements, termed formally the “socialist division of labor,” it had established over the years with Moscow and a number of other communist capitals.

For long a critic of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, Castro railed against the changes in the Soviet Union and in the communist camp more generally, and openly and publicly attacked the Soviet leadership that promoted them. Responding in kind to the criticisms, and long before the actual collapse of the Soviet Union itself, Moscow moved to a cash basis in the bulk of its dealings with Havana, a change that spelled massive dislocation for the beleaguered Cuban economy and government.

Already in Trouble

As we have seen, in July 1990, Fidel declared the beginning of a “special period,” one in which drastic measures would be necessary to ensure the Revolution's survival and where a tightening of belts as never seen before would be the rule. This was hardly surprising because the national economy as a whole was to shrink by between

35 and 50 percent from 1989 to 1993. Exports were particularly hard hit and Cuba's ability to import was dealt a massive blow. Before the collapse, the Soviets took 63 percent of Cuba's sugar, 73 percent of its nickel, 95 percent of its citrus, and 100 percent of its electrical components. They exported 63 percent of what Cubans imported to eat, 98 percent of what they used for fuel, 80 percent of their intake of machines and equipment, and 74 percent of other manufactured goods. In only four years, Cuba lost 80 percent of its purchasing power abroad.¹⁸ The new importance of previously neglected non-socialist markets and sources for imports could not have been starker. Before the Special Period, Western Europe represented only 6.7 percent of Cuban trade and the Americas a mere 5.7 percent. This would have to change if the Revolution was to survive.

The Special Period saw all manner of economic but very limited political reform to answer the challenges posed by the new context. The United States, sensing the vulnerability of the regime as never before, moved quite quickly to reinforce its embargo through the 1992 Torricelli Act and thus pressured the government even more. Rumors of impending doom abounded.

The armed forces seemed particularly hard hit by the Soviet collapse and the end of the Warsaw Pact. In the first place, the size of the military establishment was cut drastically, as is discussed later. Officially having been halved, the forces are in fact less than half their size of a mere decade and a half ago and some have argued that they are barely more than a fifth of their strength during the halcyon days of the 1980s.¹⁹ And while Cuban statistics on military matters, like those of most other Latin American armed forces, are notoriously unreliable, it is fairly certain that truly ferocious levels of cuts have been endured. Indeed, if the figures from the International Institute for Strategic Studies can be given credence, these losses in personnel are even more striking.²⁰

Acquisition of equipment and weapons quickly became part of the new cash-only policy being applied by the Russians. To all intents and purposes this simply meant that none at all could be acquired.²¹ While the threat from Washington seemed to be growing, the ability to counter it was clearly waning. The siege mentality prevalent on the island redoubled and the long decline of Cuban military capabilities began.

The problem of no new acquisitions was serious enough. But worse was the lack of access to spare parts, those so essential elements of military operations and even training. Very soon into the Special Period it became obvious to observers that the cannibalization of vehicles had begun in earnest and that many vehicles were being taken out of service to ensure that others could remain operational.

Training was also curtailed. The shattering loss of fuel supplies led to cuts in training, deployments, service flying, and general operations.²² Useful live fire exercises, dependent on ammunition replacement, became much less frequent. Related to these trends was an even more dramatic drop in the rate of call-ups of conscripts. And many of those who were called up were increasingly put to work not in the training field but in sugar and other essential crop production. Still others, especially those with language or related skills, were sent to jobs in the tourist industry. There had always been a program whereby some young men did their service in nonmilitary taskings such as education and medicine, or in nonmilitary branches of the state such as customs, immigration, or the fire service, but now this became a major portion of the annual call-up. The period of service was likewise reduced from three years to two in March 1991 and most of the troops were soon being housed close to or even at home in order to save on maintenance costs.²³

In line with the above, the military was asked to assist in the Special Period by taking on new jobs and responsibilities in the tourism industry. Soon the armed forces were running hotels, doing language training, spiriting tourists around the island on tours, and any number of other activities, all paid for in hard currency, the increasingly adored and crucial “fula” of the Cuban of the 1990s. Aircraft normally used for parachute training were converted to carry tourists. The forces were also asked to feed themselves. This snapshot is developed further later on in an attempt to complete this picture.

All of this is of course impressive in the context of a national effort to beat the effects of the embargo and the Special Period. Indeed, it can be seen as the very stuff of mythmaking. But the military reality is that these responsibilities usually take away from training and other essential military tasks. There is simply no doubt that the overall effect has been a reduction in the efficiency of the armed forces regarding their main military role of national defense.

Just as drastic has been the cutting of military linkages with the outside world. The Cuban armed forces, and especially their security and intelligence services, had, for a Third World country, an unrivalled international network on which to draw for information and intelligence, as well as a host of other needs. Before the end of the cold war, Cuban forces were of course actually deployed in many overseas countries. Very important as well were the activities of Cuban military attachés in embassies in most parts of the world. In addition, of course, the Cuban military had access to much of the Warsaw Pact’s intelligence network; indeed, the island, especially through the large Lourdes intelligence establishment near Havana, run by the Soviets,

also contributed to that wider set up through its proximity to the United States.

Little of all this remains. Military cooperation with Cuba was one of the first casualties of Gorbachev's determination to improve relations with the United States at virtually any cost. The Lourdes facility quickly became a lesser priority for the USSR. Soviet, East German, and other Warsaw Pact training of Cuban intelligence personnel ceased. Sharing of information seems to have virtually ended as well although the long-term connections of individual Russian and Cuban intelligence officers no doubt ensure some continuing informal linkages. Very few Cuban embassies still have military attachés and, if they do, they are unlikely to have them in such numbers or with such personnel and financial support as to make them fully effective. Indeed, Raúl himself has suggested that there may only be some ten such attachés serving abroad.²⁴ Thus the Cuban armed forces, after being "linked up" for so long, are now in many senses virtually "blind" where analyses of the outside world are concerned. The reinforced Chinese connection is in this sense very important in its potential if limited in its value to date. More is said on this later.

A much more difficult subject to analyze is that of the connection between the FAR and MININT, the Ministry of the Interior, and its numerous and semi-military personnel. The enhanced siege mentality is especially difficult to handle in a Special Period where even loyalists are being forced to compromise their belief in the Revolution in order to eke out a living. The riot of 1994 known as the "Habanazo" left the security forces under no illusions about the ease with which these troubled times could lead to serious public disturbances, which could indeed threaten the regime.

The answer has doubtless been that MINFAR has begun to close ranks even further with MININT and of course in formal terms has even taken it over. In recent years, several senior officers and even generals have been posted from the FAR to the Interior Ministry forces. There is much speculation about whether this means that the armed forces will be more tailored to internal security in the future, or whether they are determined to avoid any such role and are thus helping out with individual personnel rather than taking on this role in any direct way themselves. As is argued later, it is the belief of this author that the latter assessment is correct.

Thus the Special Period has hit hard at a military force that has carried much of the weight of the changes, even though, as we shall see, it has found significant room to profit from the circumstances at hand. It has responded with many original ideas and brought to bear its manpower, organizational capabilities, discipline, wide-ranging

resources, and skills to face the extraordinary challenges posed to it at this time. Its influence as a result has no doubt grown, reinforced by the absolute requirement of the government to have at its disposal a loyal and effective defense establishment.

A Snapshot of the Armed Forces Today

The *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias* remain one of the two main pillars of the state in the difficult times through which Cuba is living at the moment. Despite huge cuts they remain a major institution of the society, and the only one capable of ensuring its stability. They do indeed appear to be the “last bulwark” of the state in times of crisis. Their political role is of course difficult to assess. Cuba is a closed political system with no deep analysis done of the functioning of its body politic outside government and Party circles. Despite the existence of often impressive “think tanks” in a wide range of areas, including politics, defense, and international relations, there is no effective exchange of views publicly on these matters, no open criticism of the government, and no open body of literature available to chronicle and encourage the study and discussion of these sensitive topics as there is in liberal democratic societies. Thus assessments of something as delicate as the political role of the armed forces are done outside the country only, and rarely by people close to the institutions of state, or indeed by people who have spent much time on the island.

Cuba is a country with a remarkably personalist style of government obvious to all observers since 1959. Fidel is the key figure in the Revolution, the government, the Party, the armed forces, and in politics as a whole, as he has been since the insurgents’ victory. He is at the pinnacle of power, appears to love that status, and has proven himself an able politician with a keen grasp of Cuba’s situation and a determination that the country see the course through without abandoning its values and achievements. As is usual with such personalist governments, only the closest watching of the movements of the inner circle can avail one much in terms of hard information on what is going on, much less on what is going to go on in the future.

Despite rumors to the contrary, it is unlikely that Fidel has actually yielded many of the main levers of power to anyone else. While the Party matters, as do the armed forces, and while there are a number of key persons making some decisions, close to the *máximo líder*, it is still true that he is the person who counts and he makes the main choices when things of note are to be settled.

It is clear, however, that the armed forces do have a political position of simply exceptional importance in the country. Raúl Castro,

heir presumptive to his brother, is head of MINFAR and a long-term figure of great importance in the regime. His family connection to the leader, his status as one of the most central of the "historic figures" of the Revolution, his long period of making his own power position as secure as possible in the forces, the Party, and the state, all suggest that he is a power to reckon with at the present and will be so for at least some time in the future. His frequently remarked upon lack of charisma, especially obvious in the shadow of his brother, is of course a problem but not one that should be exaggerated. Those closest to him, as is shown later on, are usually quite impressed by him and he is certainly not considered "boring" by them although he appears to be so considered by the youth of the capital. His renomination as, in effect, Fidel's political heir in 1997 was an important event in the context of its being underscored in the midst of the Special Period and the arrival of other and younger leaders to the political limelight, but it was of course unnecessary since this succession arrangement was already long known by the public and assumed by them for even longer.

The armed forces do offer, as is discussed later on in this book, advantages to the government, which no one else can, and this ensures a political position of weight. The government needs the FAR, perhaps more than ever before as popular discontent increases and the effects of the Special Period weigh heavily on the population as a whole. The FAR can count on a degree of popularity with the population as a whole that cannot be matched by the Party, MININT, many historic figures of the Revolution, or any other institution.

It is nonetheless likely that their main route of access to influence passes through the position of Raúl as a manager of major resources, a key figure in the reform process, a trusted family member, and a man with a proven record of matchless loyalty to his brother. He can see Fidel virtually at any time and his brother appears to trust his advice about defense and many other matters. Defense issues automatically gain considerable priority under the present conditions but this is of course heightened by this context of personal access and confidence.

A second route to influence is through mutual respect and, on occasion, jealousies and concern as well, which the armed forces enjoys with the Communist Party. This has gone through ups and downs. The military were often wary of the Party, which after all had not backed Fidel until the very last months of the Batista government, in the early days of the new regime.²⁵ The Party was clearly jealous of the position of the armed forces while it was struggling to becoming established and anchored in the Cuban political system. But with time the Party became massively linked with the forces. Most senior officers

were members. Officers and Party leaders, as is frequently seen in this study, often were obliged to work together on any number of social and military projects in which there was a requirement for mutual assistance. Over time the linkages solidified.

Nonetheless frictions remain between the two and may even be growing. As we shall see, while being very different from most Latin American armed forces, the FAR are still an institution, with institutional interests and institutional instincts for survival. As seen elsewhere, the FAR rejected political commissars along the Soviet model early on. The Cuban Communist Party's role within the FAR has been rightly termed that of "an organization of propaganda and discipline as well as an instrument for the political activities of soldiers."²⁶ Many officers do believe that the Party on occasion has done great damage to the Revolution. Resources are few and far between and some in the army clearly believe that their institution is contributing much more to the country—in manpower, tourism and agricultural support, management of other key areas of the economy, defense of the Revolution, and even ideas—than is the Party.

Many armed forces officers are key individuals in the country's decision making. They are usually seen as being close to Raúl, and are even termed, rather surprisingly, by some as *raulistas*. General Ulises Rosales del Toro, for example, was early on sent to head the sugar industry as the crisis deepened after being deputy to the minister in MINFAR and clearly a favorite of key elements of the national leadership. Abelardo Colomé Ibarra, a career military officer and a veteran of the African wars, is currently Minister of the Interior. General Silvano Colás Sánchez was until recently Minister of Communications, a portfolio of great importance, but has been replaced by a civil engineer, Roberto Ignacio González Planas. Much more on this is discussed later.

It appears to be this element of closeness to Fidel that is crucial to the influence of the armed forces. There are few signs of real factions within the governing group that shows itself to be tightly knit and loyal in the extreme to the nation's leader. This loyalty is of course cemented by significant personal advantages arising from these positions, although one should be careful not to exaggerate this factor to the exclusion of others.

The economic role of the FAR is only somewhat clearer than the political but it is clearer in many aspects. After all, here the need to cooperate with international business interests has obliged the military to be a little more open in some of its dealings. The military has, to the surprise of many, actually proven quite adept at moving into several economic spheres; but it should be remembered that its

experience in the economy was significant long before the Special Period. Indeed, it is credited with many of the more workable and advanced, even daring, ideas as to how to reform the state in response to the Special Period's challenges. Perhaps because it could not be accused of disloyalty or of "being soft on capitalism" or on the "enemy," the military could make these more dramatic suggestions, which others would be fearful of doing.

Chapter 3

The Blows: The FAR Alone in a Cruel World

As we have seen, in the summer of 1990 members of the armed forces of Cuba received, like other Cubans, the news that a “special period in time of peace” had been declared and they were to be required to make special sacrifices in order to save the Revolution and the nation.¹ Rare indeed was the Cuban who would escape the consequences of this declaration by the “Comandante en Jefe,” a call for renewed efforts far beyond those of the past.

The declaration was of course itself the consequence of the rapid impact of the end of the special relationship with the Soviet Union and the Comecon trading bloc, a connection whose “socialist division of labour” had ensured highly favorable circumstances for Cuban exports and imports. The collapse of the supposed socialist brotherhood in the months following the autumn of 1989 had torn apart these arrangements just as it was soon to destroy the USSR itself. But even before this negotiations over the next year’s oil assistance package and other matters were giving the Cubans, and the FAR in particular, forewarning of what might happen. At the July 26 annual commemoration ceremonies of 1989, Fidel told the crowd that “we can no longer say with certainty if socialist camp supplies, which arrived with the precision of a clock for thirty years, will continue.”² Within a few months the Cubans knew the full news, that they most certainly would not, and found their economy totally shattered, their well-being assaulted across the board, and the much-touted achievements of the Revolution under siege. What was to be the armed forces’ fate in the Special Period? How was it to change in the light of the new world around it? This chapter seeks to bring out the main lines of the answers to those questions.

How Did Fidel React?

Order was maintained relatively easily in the Special Period's early days. But the "Habanazo" of August 1994 shocked the government out of any complacency. And while it is easy to see that event as exceptional it is important not to take it entirely out of context. There had already been related popular disturbances, first in the port town of Cojimar just east of Havana in the summer of 1993, and then in Regla, the sector of the capital just across the bay from Old Havana. And of course the government was under no illusions that Cubans were happy with the truly frightful conditions they were enduring in the very worst early days of the Special Period.

This situation did seem to have the most profound impact on Fidel and the government. As will be returned to repeatedly in this volume, it is important to note that the FAR are rarely seen, and certainly do not see themselves as a repressive instrument of the government. They have not fired on the people to date and it is clear that doing so would be the most unacceptable thing they had ever been asked to do. They are in their own minds different from other Latin American armed forces because of their revolutionary past and their revolutionary tradition. They see themselves truly as the "people's army" of a revolutionary people.

Fidel can be in little doubt as to the dangers of such a tradition in the context of the suffering and unhappiness of the Special Period. And with the "Habanazo" the problem presented itself in a dramatic fashion indeed. No thinking person in the government, the Party, or the FAR had been unaffected by the events in Eastern Europe and in China in that extraordinary year of 1989. Many Cuban retired officers have told me how shocked they were to see that no armed force of any socialist country did anything at all to stem the processes unleashed in that autumn. And certainly no East European armed force was willing to be used by government and Party to, in a sustained way, suppress the demonstrations that stimulated and accompanied those vast changes. Indeed, in Rumania the armed forces actually joined the popular movement for the overthrow of the communist regime then in place and fought against those elements still loyal to the Ceaucescu government.

In China, the message was different but still clear where Cuba was concerned. There the People's Liberation Army certainly showed its loyalty in dealing firmly and harshly with anticomunist dissent. That may have been thought to be all to the good. But it did so with such ferocity and in ways so horrifying to those in Cuba steeped in the revolutionary army mystique that far from being an interesting model

for the FAR, it became their nightmare scenario. Domingo Amuchástegui is certainly right when he suggests that the crushing of pro-democracy elements in Tiananmen Square was to become the "haunting ghost for each and every debate within the Cuban political class."³ And nowhere was that debate more central than for the FAR which, even if not always as given to discussion as some other sectors of the governing elite, appears to have been on this matter even more so.

Both Amuchástegui and Brian Latell, impressive Cuba watchers, argue that Raúl Castro was himself especially preoccupied with all of these events. They argue that he may even have opposed the contingency planning that would normally occur in any armed force when faced with a potentially serious internal security situation. What is clear from my own conversations with Cuban officials, serving and retired, in recent years, is that Raúl was indeed most concerned about the events unfolding in Eastern Europe and China and how similar ones might play out if nothing was done to address the tremendous difficulties Cubans were facing merely trying to survive in their day-to-day lives. The Chinese option of fierce repression was not considered a serious one by Raúl or by the FAR as a whole.

It was simply inconceivable to think of using armor, or even infantry, to crush demonstrators as had happened in China. It was unimaginable that the Cuban regular soldier, not to mention the conscript, could be asked to fire modern military weaponry on the public in a country that prided itself on a revolutionary ethos and having an army of the people. Something else would have to be found. It is hardly surprising then that Raúl became one of the leaders most keen to see economic performance and thereby improvements in the actual living standards of the public as the way to stymie unrest and give the population renewed hope that better times were on the way and that the Special Period was not going to be permanent.

Well before the Habanazo or even the much earlier Cojimar incident, Raúl was proposing that the FAR take an even greater role than before in the economy and was getting his way. Whereas Fidel may not have been as reluctant to use force to uphold the regime, as was his brother, he also backed such moves.⁴ And his own extraordinary personal intervention in settling down those involved in the Havana rioting must, while ensuring him of his still remarkable ability to keep control of events, have made him pause even further over the dreary prospect of military intervention in the streets against public antigovernment outcries.

Far better a move to greater military control of the economy than one to greater military involvement in smashing domestic unrest: such

seemed to be the dominant reasoning in Raúl's, and then Fidel's mind. The military were loyal and efficient. They could help out now as they had done in the past where the Revolution's survival was concerned. And it could be easily argued that they had done historically as much through their role in the economy as that in national defense of the traditional kind. Surely it was time to call the FAR back to help stave off violent threats to the Revolution rather than later to need to call on the institution to suppress them. This was to be the political background to the more directly obvious impact the Special Period would have on the armed forces.

The FAR in All This

Some observers felt at the time that the armed forces would be the last to see the impact of the shocks of the Special Period. The darling and key prop of the system put in place by Fidel Castro, the FAR would surely be needed to keep the system secure under a combination of greatly enhanced United States and other foreign pressure, as well as growing dissatisfaction at home with the regime. Thus, some argued that the forces would be maintained at a high level, would remain the somewhat spoiled children of the government, and would find a way around the negative consequences of the Special Period's arrival.⁵

This was all to misjudge Fidel Castro, his brother Raúl, and the FAR themselves. It is true that Fidel quickly insisted that it would be necessary to strengthen national defense, not diminish it.⁶ But Castro's pragmatism ensured that within a few months, the forces were cut roughly in half, thousands of officers and tens of thousands of other ranks were released into the civilian economy, and stark orders were received obliging the armed forces to re-think their contribution to the country and to the Revolution.⁷

The previous military system had of course been based on links with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe even more than those of the country as a whole had been. The vast majority of equipment and weaponry came from the Eastern bloc, most of it from the USSR itself. Training systems were entirely Soviet-based, right down to some elements of fairly basic training. Soviet instructors in Cuba were there in large numbers "training the trainers." That is, they rarely if ever were responsible for training the actual troops at the lowest level of the chain of command, but they did have a vast role in the training of officers and NCOs who would then train local other ranks. And Cuban officers and even senior NCOs went to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in large numbers in order to undergo more advanced courses there.⁸

Advanced armor courses, as well as those for senior joint command, sophisticated flying; naval, land, and air tactical command; strategic studies, ship command, and a host of technical courses were given to Cubans in the Soviet Union or other parts of Eastern Europe. In addition, Cuba was furnished with large amounts of intelligence by Soviet and other socialist states' armed forces. It should be said, however, that Cuba also provided the "alliance" with intelligence not only through the already-mentioned Soviet facility at Lourdes on the island, but also through the island's special links with guerrilla movements and at least supposedly left-leaning revolutionary governments in many parts of the world, and in particular in Africa and Latin America. Indeed, it was common knowledge that Cuba had more military attachés and other personnel deployed internationally than any other country in the Third World.

Of course, dependence for weapons, equipment, and even tactics and doctrine cut both ways. When things were going well the FAR could count on support that few other developing countries could dream of. But when things went wrong Cuba's defense was left in a sad way. Spare parts became very hard to find and new ones could now only be purchased under the new Soviet regulations on a "cash and carry basis," cash being in terms of hard currency, Cuba's only too obvious Achilles' heel. It is doubtless true that linkages to the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, which in some ways went back to the first Cuban-Soviet trade deals of 1959, had until then stood the test of time. And while there had been any number of ups and downs on the way, Cuban military dependence on the Soviets had served the Cuban armed forces well.⁹ The issue, however, became how to address the absolute implosion of that proven support system in an era of penury and profound national crisis.

In addition to the virtual collapse of the intelligence system, ammunition for exercises became increasingly scarce. And this was especially true for Cuba's huge reserve force. As of the early 1980s, and as will be discussed later, the arrival of Ronald Reagan in the White House and other international trends suggested to the Cubans that their defense and deterrence posture could only be maintained through a vast reserve system. This approach would provide the relatively small regular force with a large manpower pool in rapid order in case of crisis.

The defensive/deterrence system of Cuba had long been based on some simple but telling elements. The main threat was the United States, determined in the Cuban view to unseat the Revolution, destroy the achievements of the last decades, and re-install a government at the beck and call of Washington, as had been the way of things

before 1959. There was no way that Cuba could defeat a determined invasion attempt by the greatest power in the world, especially in the years after the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, which showed that Moscow was only under very special circumstances actually going to be willing to *risk* war with the United States over the island.¹⁰

Under these circumstances, Cuba needed a military system not able to defeat the United States, but nonetheless able to deal such a blow to any invasion that the game would not be worth the candle. That is, it was envisaged that with a military force, regular and reserve, able to resist at length an invasion and able to inflict serious casualties on the invaders, the United States would be deterred from attack.¹¹ This involved in the years after 1980 the development of a structure and doctrine based on the concept of “la guerra de todo el pueblo” (the war of all the people). In this system, the regulars would be a powerful professional force backed by a large conscript force serving three-year terms of duty with the colors and providing essential “stiffening,” as it is termed in Anglophone militaries, for the total immediately available force.

Equally important, however, was to be a vast reserve of the *Milicias de Tropas Territoriales* (Territorial Militia Troops or MTT) and other auxiliaries who in their hundreds of thousands would support the regulars in case of invasion, first by mobilizing and undertaking secondary tasks, and then by taking up specialized responsibilities allowing the regulars to regroup and continue the struggle once the enemy's initial air borne and sea borne landings had taken place. For these roles the militiamen and women received basic combat training and did occasional refresher training over their years of reserve part-time service.¹² The thinking was that the potential for a protracted guerrilla war would more than anything else act to deter the “hawks” in the United States.

With such an extensive defense system, one involving such a large percentage of the country's youth, it was obvious that the loss of the Soviet link would be a major blow. For a reserve system of this kind requires large amounts of ammunition, spare parts, stocks of uniforms, and fuel for deployments and exercises. None of this was to be available as required in the months and years of the Special Period. Instead, “cannibalization” of equipment and weapons became the rule.¹³ A limited number of truly combat-ready units and formations would be maintained, those most needed for frontline defense, at the cost of drastically reducing the combat-ready status of many other units. And the reserves necessarily became less of a real, daily priority while maintaining their theoretical centrality to the still current strategic plan.

In addition, conscripts for the now much smaller army were not needed in the same numbers as before. Instead of the majority of them being incorporated into regular units as in the past, ever larger numbers were sent to the work brigades of the *Ejército Juvenil de Trabajo* (EJT) and the *Brigadas de Producción y Defensa* (Production and Defense Brigades) in agriculture, tourism, construction, and similar fields to which reference will be made later in this volume.

Uniforms became scarce and while the FAR still looked martial enough, they were getting distinctly ragged. Ammunition became scarcer still as did spare parts. But in no other field did the impact of the disappearance of the Soviet link become as frightening as in that of fuel. And as seen, with the end of Havana–Moscow fuel arrangements, the island had to work with a small fraction of its previous supply. The army was asked to play its part in facing the crisis. It did so, but its mobility, training, physical presence in the country, availability, and flexibility suffered in direct consequence. This also will be returned to later on.

How Did the FAR React to the Disaster?

The FAR, as an institution, obeys orders. And the orders emanating from the commander in chief in the summer of 1990 could not have been any clearer. The armed forces would have to cease being a burden on the national treasury. In short they would have to pay for themselves. The shock suggested that desperate diseases require desperate remedies. And the high command, under Raúl Castro, began to tackle the challenge with foresight and originality. A series of immediate steps were taken and studies were commissioned to discover longer-term measures needed since the crisis was likely to be a lengthy one.

The first step was, as mentioned, a simply massive cut in the size of the armed forces, from well over 200,000 personnel to roughly half that figure.¹⁴ In addition, many fewer conscripts were to be taken in, and reserve forces and their activities were to be slashed. Emergency measures to employ manpower to best effect and to allow the armed forces to feed themselves were established. But in addition, the longer term required measures that would ensure the armed forces were being used to good effect for the total recovery of the nation as a whole.¹⁵ Law Number 75 of National Defense was placed before the National Assembly in late 1994. It laid out the legal structure for the changes to be implemented.¹⁶ Under it and other arrangements

the armed forces would be assisting with recovery through essentially:

- feeding themselves and the part of the population in their regular or special national service components;
- earning foreign exchange through activities they were especially well suited to perform and which could be used for military purposes or others for which the state had need;
- maintaining emergency services in conjunction with the Ministry of the Interior, to be reinforced by the military especially after the “Habano” riots of August 1994, and in line with search and rescue and disaster relief duties of long standing;
- placing emphasis on those roles required by Cuban foreign policy as a result of the real need to reduce points of friction with the United States, especially in the fields of illegal immigration control and antinarcotics operations.

This reorientation allowed the armed forces to show exceptional flexibility and prove themselves immensely useful to the Revolution at this crucial time, not only in traditional roles associated with national defense, but in lines of activity vital for national recovery and stability. Many of the latter roles were closely related to tasks that the FAR had for long had, in one form or another, as part of their economic activities in support of the state. A quick survey of some of these roles will be helpful here.

Agriculture

The EJT and the MTT became key forces in the struggle both to feed the armed forces and to earn foreign exchange and other resources for military and other projects. This program worked in a number of ways many of which were linked to agriculture and some of which had been in place at other points in time.

The arrival of many thousands of young Cubans in the various branches of the armed forces each year gave a manpower source of great value to the FAR. And whereas many of these people continued to see service with the more strictly military elements of the armed forces, more and more others saw service in fields not traditionally seen as military. Youthful individuals were given the task of helping out with the harvest or doing other agricultural jobs connected with citrus, livestock, chicken raising, and especially sugar production. Thousands of these “soldiers” were sent from basic training, or on occasion even without having received that staple of becoming a

soldier at all, straight to the farms or their related activities owned or operated by the armed forces. The production provided by this means not only ensured that the armed forces were fed properly and thus that their morale was enhanced, but also that there was money, on occasion even foreign exchange, for those forces.¹⁷

Just as dramatic were the new ideas circulating and soon put into force with regard to military industries. Officers were posted not only to industries with a defense connection, but also to many others where military approaches were felt to be potentially valuable. Discipline, military order, chain of command, intolerance of absenteeism, access to resources on a special basis, and other factors made such postings make sense to a desperate government. It is too early, and there are too few studies produced to date, to allow for a conclusion on this subject, but the durability of the measures leads one to conclude that at least for the government, the experiment has been worthwhile.¹⁸ This will be discussed in much greater detail later on.

Two Troubling Trends

It would be wrong to say that all is well with the institution, despite what is said above and below. Several trends are worrying to senior and junior commanders alike and will be dealt with in their various aspects now and in appropriate future chapters.

The most troubling is doubtless that of corruption. As mentioned, the FAR consider themselves the main upholders of the finest traditions of self-sacrifice, internationalism, service to country, and courage. And while some of these feelings they share with the armed forces of other Latin American countries, they differ from most of these colleagues by having given proof of their loyalty to these traditions in both war and peace, over recent decades.¹⁹

In this context it is all the more troubling to note the growth in corruption within the ranks of the officer corps especially over the Special Period. It could perhaps not have been otherwise. The very existence of new and old economic institutions now headed by armed forces officers, often on active duty, when combined with the sacrifices demanded of all during these terrible years, has meant that the temptation to profit from holding key positions has proven irresistible for a number of officers. Nor are only officers involved in the problem. For the unique nature of the FAR response to the crisis has meant that not only many other ranks, senior NCOs, but even privates and corporals, are also working in jobs related to tourism and related sectors (or even just to agriculture) where the potential for small-scale corruption is considerable. And even though by Latin American standards this may

seem a minor problem indeed, within the special circumstances of the FAR it is viewed as anything but inconsequential.²⁰

The armed forces were in many senses considered beyond reproach until the Special Period. Their efforts over so many years seemed to ensure that this situation would prevail, especially in terms of prestige with the public. Cubans admired their armed forces. Male Cubans overwhelmingly served in those forces at one time or another over their lives and many times remained closely connected with them through the various levels of reserve forces set up over the decades since revolutionary victory in 1959 and which reflected the desire on the part of government to retain a mass pool of reservists as part of the general deterrence plan mentioned.

The sense of dedication of the armed forces was admitted and admired by the public at large. The FAR were omnipresent in Cuban life and generally there was little complaint that this should be so. Cuban youth may not have been keen to do their military service, but they generally accepted the need for such service and the positive sides of it. Officers were especially respected. It is largely in that context that the Ochoa case, discussed elsewhere, was so important.

The verb *pinchar* in contemporary Cuba means to work. A *pincho* is a job, with often the implication of its being a good job. But it is also used to denote a person who is high up in his or her field, and usually with access to power and responsibility. In the Special Period, however, the word has come to be used negatively about people who somehow have been able through their position to avoid some of the more negative aspects of Cuban life over these years. Members of the Communist Party, especially of its higher echelons, are often singled out as especially tempted by the advantages of being "pinchos" and of living somehow high on the hog while the rest of society suffers. This is doubtless exaggerated by some elements of the population, as one might expect at a time of such severe and indeed generalized suffering.

Be that as it may, resentment of supposed or real privilege is evident in the conversation of normal Cubans confronting the real challenges of the present day and doing so seemingly without hope for major change any time soon. In the early years of the Special Period armed forces officers seemed to be relatively rarely attacked on this basis. But rumors of corruption, and actual cases, within the FAR have meant that this has slowly changed. Senior officers are now often included as "pinchos" by at least some members of the general public. Indeed, they are on occasion singled out, especially those in positions of power within industry, as being especially prone to the sort of minor, or on occasion even major, corruption that enrages and also engages people

so at the present time. The very reputation held for so many years of being above petty profiteering from their positions seems to ensure today and under present circumstances that such officers become the target for public ire.

The government has moved fiercely to quash such concerns. Several officers have been arrested, removed, or both after investigations showed examples of wrongdoing. Penalties for those officers accused of corruption have been exceptionally harsh, sending a clear message that the state will not permit public confidence in an institution so central to the government to atrophy as a result of individuals' misdeeds. It is debatable to what extent this has worked. Public comment on "pinchos," including military ones, has not really been dampened. Indeed, junior officers on occasion join their voices to those in the public who denounce elements of corruption among those holding senior rank. Interestingly, public complaint rarely touches officers of up to lieutenant-colonel rank, nor does it affect the prestige of the simple soldier or NCO except for those "in" MININT. It should be said that many senior officers feel the matter is greatly exaggerated and not worthy of the attention it has received, but this reaction should perhaps be expected.²¹ The nature of generational issues in the officer corps of so many of the world's armies would suggest that this issue is a real one, and could become more real in the context of age differences finding political expression as seen in much of this book.

Another trend of concern is equally related to junior officers. Many of these, especially second lieutenants and lieutenants, are not old enough to have very clear if any memories of the relatively good times before the Special Period. They tend to have joined the forces for prestige, idealistic ideas of service, or for the visible advantages of military service at the time of their *juramento a la bandera*.²² And although much of this still applies to a considerable extent, it must be said that much does not. As for other Cubans so for junior officers, time spent in the tourist industry would provide financially much better than military service.²³ The Special Period is over 15 years old and shows few signs of disappearing even though it is obvious to all that many things are improving. But with professional reasons of outdated weapons and equipment, curtailed training possibilities, restricted promotions linked to fewer activities abroad and cuts in strength at home, much reduced potential for interesting postings, and many other factors; real life in the forces can prove much less attractive than many thought when they joined or indeed even experienced earlier on in their careers. This may show itself to be very important indeed.

The FAR and Foreign Policy

The role of the armed forces since the Revolution has been most dramatically that of deterring or defeating an invasion by the United States. This is not to say that it has had no internal role. The opposite is the case. The armed forces were involved in defeating small insurgent groups throughout much of the early 1960s. In addition, under Fidel Castro's personal leadership, they defeated an invasion coming from abroad, but they did so against almost exclusively Cuban citizens at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. At the same time, the FAR are the major support for the Interior Ministry and its efforts to maintain direct control of the country. And they act as a general deterrent against unrest through their ubiquity and power throughout the country if no longer in the same way through their size. Indeed, since the late 1980s, the role of the armed forces in support of MININT has grown to an extraordinary extent.²⁴

Nonetheless, it is the deterrence and defense against foreign attack role that is seen as central by the armed forces themselves and that has been the key to an understanding of their organization, training, logistics, doctrine, and equipment arrangements since the regime was solidified in power. The FAR see themselves not only as the main bulwark of the state, but also as its most valuable diplomatic asset. The "export of revolution" phase of 1962-1968, the internationalist role in Africa and parts of Latin America in the 1970s and to some extent the 1980s, and now the utility of the forces in the direct relationship with the United States, have all meant a position for the armed forces as instruments of national policy that it would be foolish to ignore.²⁵

In the Special Period, they have been an agent of confidence building with the United States and it has perhaps been in that role where their utility has been greatest to the state although this is of course arguable. While this may appear counterintuitive at first glance, the FAR have shown themselves extraordinarily useful to Fidel Castro in a period where U.S. attempts to unseat him have increased in intensity and where the security dimension of the relationship (or lack of such) has taken on at first much less and more recently much more importance.

For the period after the end of the cold war and up to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Washington moved steadily farther away from considering Havana as a security threat. Despite attempts by hard-liners to continue to paint Cuba as a menace, many in government, especially the Pentagon itself, increasingly poured cold water on the idea. Indeed, even before the cold war drew to a close it was clear that the Department of Defense (DOD) was not really taking the

Cuban threat scenario seriously any longer. And from the late 1980s until 2001 this trend gathered steam.

By the early 1990s, the Pentagon in Washington was beginning to place the emphasis where Cuba was concerned on its potential instability in the Special Period as the main issue in the security field presented by the island and its situation. That is, the DOD began to see the main scenario for threat coming from the country in a context where the Cuban government would be unable to control the political and perhaps especially the social problems that the society was facing and was forced to crack down on growing dissent, even if that meant the use of force.

Under those circumstances, Pentagon analyses began to suggest, there could well be an explosion on the island. They argued that this might lead to massive emigration from the country aiming at arriving in the United States, not only the richest country by far in the region, but also one where the welcoming reception for arriving Cubans had been guaranteed since changes to U.S. immigration law made in the 1960s.²⁶ By the mid-1990s such thinking in the Pentagon had become anchored policy as witnessed by the Graham Amendment to the 1997 U.S. defense appropriations over those years that occasioned a formal statement by the Pentagon excluding Cuba as a potential direct threat to the security of the United States although suggesting that this indirect potential was growing.²⁷ This will be looked at in greater detail later on.

This is not to say that this Pentagon stance was not criticized. The right in the United States, especially in southern Florida, was quick to suggest that the DOD was wrong in its analysis. They pointed to the nuclear power project in Jagua near Cienfuegos as a direct threat in that it might bring Cuba closer to having nuclear weapons. But in the light of the Chernobyl disaster and other issues relating to Soviet technological skills in the nuclear area, these sources began even more to suggest that the installation might also be an indirect threat because of its nearness to U.S. territory and its likely poor security arrangements. They raised other issues as well, as we shall see.

The DOD stuck to its guns, however, and the critics were unable to convince effectively that Cuba was still a threat. The very weakness of the armed forces, added to the country's disastrous overall situation, seemed to render ridiculous the idea that it could be a threat to the United States, especially as that country became in Castro's own words, "triumphalist" in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union and became in effect the only country that could claim superpower status.

This evolution in the security context allowed for a new era in the military relationship between the two countries. And the Cuban

government quickly saw how useful the armed forces might be in the current situation. The end of the cold war had meant a remarkably rapid acceptance in the United States, and even in the Pentagon, of the existence of a new security agenda to be addressed. The international illegal drugs trade, the networks of international crime, illegal immigration, natural disasters, even ecological and medical issues, were increasingly added to the security issues of importance to the United States and other countries. And the U.S. armed forces became involved in one way or another in almost all of these new issues.

In 1986, the U.S. President had declared a "war on drugs" and the armed forces had become more involved than ever thought possible in the control of the illegal trade in those substances. Indeed, in the intelligence field, the U.S. military were given the leadership role in suppressing what was increasingly termed the "scourge" of drugs. The Coast Guard and even the armed forces began to be more and more often tasked in the area of interception of illegal immigrants over the same period and even more so in the 1990s. The military saw their natural disaster relief role increase, especially in the Caribbean and Central American regions and also elsewhere. And although the medical and anticrime roles were slower to develop the DOD accepted increasingly that there was a role for it in those fields as well.

Cuba's geographic situation, and even more importantly, its government policies in many of these regards, made it an ideal partner in the efforts mounted by the United States in dealing with this new security agenda. And whereas Cuba was active in medical efforts of an unparalleled importance internationally and in important disaster relief and anticrime initiatives, this trend was most dramatic in the field of antinarcotics. Slowly but surely the previous tendency to accuse the Cuban government of somehow being involved in the drugs trade, an assertion made often in Miami since the 1970s, gave way to a recognition that Cuba was really trying to deal with the issue.

As early as 1987 the Cuban government published pamphlets in English outlining the efforts it was taking to ensure that Cuba's strategic location along the maritime and air routes from South American producer states to the U.S. market was not used by the *narcos* in their efforts to get their products into the United States. The date of issue was not accidental given the United States' "declaration of war" on drugs the previous autumn. And the publicity given to the Ochoa trials in 1989 underscored the seriousness with which Castro was taking the matter, even to the extent of making the most serious charges against General Ochoa, a hero of the FAR in Angola, those related to treason. The reasoning was expressly that by engaging in drug trafficking from a senior military position, the defendants were casting

doubt on Cuba's efforts to control the drug trade and risking the ire of the United States and the rest of the international community for the country as a whole.

Since then there has been a relatively steady growth in the degree of cooperation between the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the Cuban authorities dealing with the issue. By 1999, there were direct negotiations between the two countries on cooperation in the field. And the United States was not so secretly delighted when the United Kingdom began a serious program of assistance to the Cubans in the area of drug interdiction. These efforts have led to dramatic statements by the former U.S. drug "czar," General Barry McCaffery, about the exemplary role played by Cuba in antidrug efforts. McCaffery, former commander of Southern Command as well, heaped praise on Castro's efforts. He called Cuba "an island of resistance to the drug threat." After long conversations with Raúl Castro and other Cuban officials he said that the Cubans "were very keen on cooperating in the fight against drugs" adding that "they are sincere" in this. On other issues he also pleased his many admirers in the Pentagon and elsewhere when he added "these people do not intend to be, and represent no national security threat to us," thereby speaking plainly on the U.S. DOD report on Cuba, and went on to say that Cuba "would be supportive of any attempt to solve the problem [of terrorism] through peaceful means." Pleasing the Cubans even more he said "They certainly are not a terrorist threat and I do not believe they are harboring terrorist organizations," adding about the series of Miami-based exile attacks on Cuba, which Cuba insists are also terrorist in nature, that "the United States should make sure it does not happen any more."²⁸ The case-by-case antidrugs cooperation is under these circumstances likely to continue, if not to prosper in the public limelight. But it is important to underscore that DEA views on Cuba matter and that they are strongly favorable to that country's efforts in an area of tremendous security interest to Washington. This is elaborated upon later.

If cooperation has grown between the two countries in this security field, it is just as impressive if not more so in that of illegal immigration. The 1994 and 1995 direct accords between Washington and Havana accompanied the shock for the United States of the "balsero" (rafter) crisis of those years, where many thousands of Cubans attempted, by any means available, to get to the United States as the worst years of the Special Period took their toll on the quality of life on the island. Here Coast Guard and on occasion military involvement between the two countries reached a height with regular patrols, joint efforts of many kinds, and a growth of understanding and mutual respect

between the two countries' security forces unthinkable during the cold war.

Disaster relief proved another area of mutual interest. Cuba quite gladly gave permission for U.S. Air Force relief aircraft overflights of the island during a series of earthquakes, hurricanes, and other disasters in the Caribbean area and Central America over the 1990s. While little public recognition of this occurred on either side both defense establishments were well aware of the value of such cooperation.

More dramatic still was the evolution of affairs in Guantánamo at the U.S. naval base, thorn in the side of Cuba since at least 1903. Here U.S. requests to Cuba to allow a widening of the air corridor into the base and over Cuban territory and national waters were acceded to rapidly by the Cuban military and diplomatic authorities. In addition, confidence-building measures were set in place to ensure that no incidents occurred in the no man's land separating Cuban from U.S. forces.²⁹ These not only included regular meetings of local military staffs of the two countries, but also involved the establishment of permanent communications links between the two in order to handle potential flash points quickly before they got out of control. Emergency meetings between commanders were also foreseen at the request of either side.

All these matters did indeed serve to build confidence between key actors in the governments of the two countries. And with the DEA, DOD, and the Coast Guard increasingly impressed with the assistance Cuba could provide in their fields of concern, powerful voices began to be heard in Washington about the positive sides of the Cuban government and the need for cooperation with a country that stood astride more than 700 miles of the approach routes to the United States from South America and the Caribbean.

It has become a reality that the Pentagon and the DEA are now the two key proponents for more bilateral cooperation although the Coast Guard and immigration authorities are not far behind. The security field, long the key problem issue, publicly at least, between the two countries, has begun to act instead as a potential key building block of cooperation in the future.

Needless to say, this has been seen by the Cuban government as of major assistance in its policy of reducing potential and real points of friction with the United States at a time when that superpower's government is seen by Havana as increasing its pressure on Cuba. Mutual respect between the two countries' security forces has provided a new and valued bridge. And given the poor showing of most other Caribbean and Latin American security forces in the anticrime, antidrugs, anti-illegal immigration, and even antinatural disaster roles;

it is hardly surprising that U.S. military and other security forces' respect for the relatively uncorrupted, efficient, and well-trained Cuban forces has grown. It is important to note that Cuban military professional admiration for the U.S. armed forces has likewise increased as the United States has abolished conscription and moved to an all professional force, that force has added successes to its 1970s and 1980s failures at a rapid rate, and U.S. senior retired military officers have come to the island.

The evolution of the bilateral relationship in this security field should be watched carefully. Given the likely role of the FAR in any transition, their links with the United States, and especially the security forces of that country, may be crucial to the evolution of events. These matters are of such importance that they will be the subject of chapter 6, where they will be given much fuller treatment.

So What Are They Today?

It is necessary now to take a step back and give the reader a clearer notion of what the FAR actually look like today. This is not a specialist tract on the Cuban military so there will be no attempt to give an intelligence-like overview. But readers will need to know at this stage at least to some degree what the FAR are like today in order to judge them as they read the chapters that follow. Then a more in-depth look at them can be given on in analysis later on. Much of what follows immediately here will be taken from *Jane's World Armies*, as authoritative a source as one can get on world armed forces. Estimates of the strength of the FAR range, sometimes widely, but it is probably true that they are in the neighborhood of some 50,000–55,000 total strength today, so that the Jane's figure of 53,500 regulars is probably very close to the true situation. This total is divided into an army of something like 38,000 regulars, a navy in the order of some 5,500 and an air force of around 10,000.

The army is supplemented by some 35,000 ready reservists, whereas the navy figure includes some 3,000 conscripts, and the air force some 6,000 of the same. When one looks at what the army is supposed to produce with its small numbers one is immediately seized by the difficulties for the institution. Officially the land force includes 5 armored, 9 mechanized, and 1 airborne brigades, with a further 12–14 reserve infantry brigades as well as an artillery group.

The greatly reduced manpower of the current FAR is thus divided into formations that, in traditional terms do not seem to compute. And this small organization is meant to maintain very roughly some 800 main battle tanks, 30 light amphibious tanks, 90 armored

reconnaissance vehicles, 200 armored infantry fighting vehicles, 800 armored personnel carriers, 42 self-propelled guns, and 170 multiple rocket launchers. But as we shall see such figures are unlikely to reflect the Special Period's need for *cannibalization* of vehicles and equipment.

There are three geographic commands. Western Command, with headquarters in Havana, includes the capital city and its surrounding province as well as Pinar del Río, the westernmost province. Central Command, with headquarters in the city of Matanzas, is responsible for the province of the same name as well as those to the south and east of Villa Clara, Cienfuegos, and Sancti Spiritus. And Eastern Command, whose headquarters is found in Cuba's second city of Santiago, is made up of the provinces of Santiago, Guantánamo, Granma, Holguín, Las Tunas, Ciego de Ávila, and Camagüey.

Each of these commands is meant to be largely self-sufficient in operational terms.³⁰ On mobilization, or so the theory goes, each of these commands, viewed as an "army," is expected to field one armored and three mechanized infantry divisions but, as mentioned by the Jane's publication, this is hard to credit. Instead, that source is almost certainly right in asserting that most of such a force would be "foot-slogging." Even so the full formal establishment of a FAR infantry division is only 5,900 men with battalions at 349 soldiers and tank battalions of 110 men and 21 tanks. The traditional Soviet ranking of divisions as category "A", "B," or "C" has lost meaning here even though it still exists in theory.³¹ It is probable that all class "C" divisions have ceased being manned to the full levels of peacetime envisaged in Soviet texts and to some extent practice. And despite television and other programs it does seem likely that Jane's assessment of the army as normally not capable of mounting higher than battalion-level operations has some truth to it, even though this author does not credit this negative assessment as applying for the units on most rapid "notice to move."³²

The navy is not any better off. With its small strength it is expected to do the many and important sovereignty and survival tasks mentioned even while operating on a full basis with only one corvette and a few patrol craft, the latter of which are sometimes given to be as low as eight in number. The submarine still on the order of battle appears no longer to be operational. There are still some fast attack boats carrying "Styx" surface-to-surface missiles but their number and configuration are in doubt.

The air force has received the least favorable assessments and seems very hard hit indeed. Jane's puts the figure of operational combat aircraft at between 20 and 30 although it does suggest that perhaps as many as 24 modern Mig fighters are in that category.

This is not in any very great sense the same FAR as before the Special Period. If one takes the 1988–1989 *Military Balance*, produced by the International Institute of Strategic Studies, as a guide, we find it still reporting “a further increase in Cuban overall military strength” as late as those years. The FAR were considered by the IISS at that time to have some 180,500 total personnel in service although this included 15,000 ready reserves serving with the army, and some 79,500 conscripts. Another 130,000 reservists were also serving during various periods each year. These were 110,000 in the army, 12,000 in the air force, and 8,000 in the navy.

The navy had at that time 13,500 personnel of whom 8,500 were conscripts, whereas the air force with a total of 22,000 included air defense units as well. With these levels of strength the air force maintained 176 combat aircraft and no less than 44 armed helicopters while the navy could keep in operation three submarines, three frigates, 58 patrol and coastal combatant vessels (18 missile craft and 40 inshore craft), two landing ships (capable of landing six tanks and 200 troops each), and a naval infantry and amphibious assault battalion.³³ There is little wonder then that at this time the FAR were considered to be truly a force to be taken seriously.

The differences in operational strength between then, just before the Special Period, and today could hardly be starker. Yet the FAR are still there, still with surprisingly high morale, still struggling on. The *Tropas Guarda Frontera* or Frontier Troops still maintain the maritime force’s perhaps 40 small patrol craft in key roles. The reserve force may well still boast some 700,000 men and women despite its cuts and reductions of all kinds. And while it is doubtless true, as Jane’s suggests, that this means a force of “low readiness,” it is too soon to say how low that readiness has been allowed to drop, especially after the remarkably successful “Bastión 2004” mass exercise of the autumn of 2004.³⁴ Efforts to ensure that the key units of the armed forces are still ready to go in their traditional deterrence and defeating of invasion roles still seem to bear some fruit even if this may appear contradictory in the light of what has just been said. Such contradictions are the daily fare of Cuban life and it should not surprise us to see them applying to the FAR as well.

Conclusion

The Cuban armed forces have been hard hit by the Special Period. All manner of cuts in personnel, fuel, training, equipment, weapons, deployments, links to the outside world, and much else have left the forces suffering severely. It is, however, unquestionable that the FAR

have shown exceptional skill in diversifying their roles and in increasing their separate access to income and resources, including invaluable foreign exchange. Their moves into agriculture, industry, and especially tourism have been central to their survivability as effective instruments of national policy. Even though they are hardly the military machine they represented during the cold war, when Soviet and other East European support was lavish and impressive, they remain *a*, and probably *the* key bulwark of the state.

Their loyalty is unquestioned even if there are disturbing trends to which we have made reference. But the flexibility, ingenuity, and special attributes of the FAR have given them a survivability few would have imagined a decade ago. While addressing impressively their own institutional problems of survival as an efficient force, they have increased their utility to the state and ensured their role as a crucial factor in any stable transition of the present system. These are impressive results by any standards.

Chapter 4

"The Proof is in the Pudding": The FAR and the Economy

The FAR are accustomed to unusual challenges, and they are just as accustomed to being involved in one way or another in the economy. Yet, never have those challenges faced been broader or more dramatic than those they see in their current massive involvement with the economy. The tasks at hand may indeed be larger, broader, and more crucial than in the past, but they are not by any means new. The *Ejército Rebelde* from the earliest years of the struggle became involved in procuring food and weapons, raising some of the former, and making some of the latter.

Once in power Fidel gave his army, and officers loyal to him, huge responsibilities for running and reforming the economy and key sectors thereof as part of his strategy to face successive early crises. Young officers, and even senior NCOs and other ranks, straight from the mountains, took over complicated economic and other tasks for which they were little prepared. And although the result was much inefficiency and waste, the times were "heroic" and such was popular mobilization in favor of the Revolution that there was little negative reaction among those in uniform.

The most famous of these was of course Ernesto *Che* Guevara, soon appointed to the Economics Ministry, a post for which, as a medical man turned *comandante*, he was almost totally unprepared. But others were only marginally better matched with the responsibilities they held. In any case there was little enough choice. Fidel was determined to have people he trusted in key positions around him, and naturally enough the people in whom he most confided were those who had gone through the years of combat in the Sierra Maestra at his side. Their paper qualifications, or rather their lack thereof, were of minor

consequence when compared with their loyalty to the *máximo líder* and their commitment to revolutionary change.

This military involvement in the economy and more widely in society again followed a revolutionary tradition going back to the time of the Ten Years' War when the *mambí* forces had to look after feeding and clothing themselves, engage in some limited production of weapons, and undertake the administration of the liberated areas of "Cuba Libre" including in all this the setting up of small workshops and farms. In addition, later on in the Independence War of 1895-1898 the rebels had again to administer the more numerous "freed" areas resulting from that war and to some extent run a series of small local economies.¹ That tradition itself had been given more recent reinforcement in terms of the work of the *Ejército Rebelde* in the Sierra Maestra where they also set up small workshops, raised food, and generally administered the territory of the new, but again self-styled "Cuba Libre." Fidel's cadres were early on only too accustomed to being given all manner of tasks, some military but some far from it, according to the priorities of the *comandante en jefe*.

Running a modern state proved, however, much more challenging than anything experienced before, especially for a group whose average age was remarkably young. And the opposition to revolutionary change soon produced an exodus of all manner of cadres that did much greater damage to the otherwise successful revolutionary experiment than had been foreseen by any of the new leadership. The radicalizing of the regime, and of its opponents, meant that steadily more areas of national life and government were being taken over by members of the army and life on the island was indeed becoming militarized.² Although this may have been most visible in the police and in education, it was dramatically so in the economy as well.

This also continued for much of the early period after the Revolution's "triumph." The army was the only institution with prestige, organizational capacity, unquestioned loyalty, and numbers at least vaguely in line with the tasks at hand.³ Thus, ever more obligations came its way as Fidel attempted to steer the ship of state forward in the face of domestic and international opposition and the massive challenges of the revolutionary process.

Indeed, much of the army reform of the time was related to producing cadres to take over not only national defense in highly trying times, but also to run the economy and the state as a whole. In the vital business of land reform, central to the reform "program" of the Revolution, such as it was, since even before the "History Will Absolve Me" speech, the army leadership had a major role and presence. And as the army added new branches it took a more direct role

in agricultural production as well, becoming an element in the direction and conduct of the harvest as well as in the management of the structures of the increasingly state-based agricultural system.

The many newly nationalized industries not infrequently saw officers of the Rebel Army take on administrative and directive roles. And economic programs of importance were just as often handed over to military officers. It is important to note that the term "military" should not be taken too far here. The officers of the then army were not professional military in any sense except the vague one that they had usually been in uniform for some time and were more experienced in fighting than in any other field of endeavor. They saw themselves primarily as revolutionaries, and as army officers only in the sense that they had commanded revolutionary soldiers in action. There was little of the Latin American norm about them. Indeed, often bearded and from the poorer classes, none had obtained an education in a military academy (sole Latin American approach to an officer's commission in virtually the whole region), all had gained their rank on campaign, and few indeed would have been considered *proper* by Latin American military leaders of the time.

This was malleable material that, under the exceptional leadership of the charismatic Fidel Castro of the time, could be molded into the type of director urgently needed even if, as was to become frequently obvious in short order, not into a knowledgeable or necessarily efficient director. Efficiency was quite willingly if not happily sacrificed in the interest of unity and devotion to the commander. The times were not ones that allowed other approaches as the Revolution quickly found itself surrounded by enemies and required to defend its project.⁴

With the passing of the years and the anchoring of the new system, new cadres of civilians could take over most of these roles even though serving and then retired officers remained more than just here and there in industry and agriculture for many years. Indeed, the successive massive expansions and reorganizations of the reserve forces meant that there was a continuing blurring of the distinction between soldier and civilian as time moved on. Nonetheless, by the 1970s, professionalization of the armed forces, with Soviet and other Warsaw Pact assistance, meant that the FAR began to look, and to some extent at least to think, more like a full-time armed force of a more traditional kind.⁵ Even so, at various times and especially in the 1970 "Ten Million Ton Harvest Campaign," the FAR seemed still very present indeed in the national economy. This merely reinforces the need to see the institution as at this time still accustomed, and in general still very comfortable with demands on its time and energies other than those related to the strictly national defense role.

Relatively sophisticated equipment and weapon systems increasingly demanded professionals and the obvious presence of armed forces officers in the economy waned. But frequent Party membership for a great many officers, and the highly ideological nature of much of their training and experience, meant that there was always an understood, if latent, knowledge that in case of need, the military could once again take on tasks that seemed far from their normal obligations. In that sense the revolutionary nature of the FAR did not really change in spite of the accentuated professionalization of the officer corps. And the constant reminders in training and major events of the need for flexibility and revolutionary ideals ensured that no one could forget that whatever the context in which Cuba found itself, the armed forces would be expected to play whatever role Fidel assigned them in ensuring the security and well-being of the state and the Revolution.⁶

This was reinforced in the 1980s by the “rectification” process. Facing declining interest in Cuba on the part of the Soviet Union, as well as very poor economic performance, Havana moved to improve the flexibility, range, and efficiency of its military industries through a new “System of Enterprise Perfection.”⁷ The Soviet-style SDPE (*Sistema de Dirección y Planificación de la Economía* or Direction and Planning System for the Economy) had lost Fidel’s confidence and Raúl was allowed to move forward in 1984 with his own plan for radical readjustment.⁸ The new approach was intended to do three things, as shown by Brian Latell:

- to promote greater self sufficiency in the FAR and reduce its dependence on the USSR,
- to increase efficiency and productivity in military factories producing uniforms, small arms, and consumer goods (Union of Military Enterprises),
- to provide a model that could be adopted elsewhere in the economy.⁹

The FAR ended up taking a major part in this effort to increase efficiency and correct many of the errors of the past. The success of the pilot project of the new program allowed for the announcement by the Cuban leadership at the Third Party Congress of 1986 of a new emphasis on the need to address inefficiency and absenteeism with military discipline and a military sense of urgency and commitment. This would be achieved in part with the extension of the newly tried approach to the other enterprises (industries and services) under the military, assessed by Domingo Amuchástegui as some 230 in number at the time.¹⁰ At the same time many armed forces serving officers

began to study business administration and techniques with some of these even going abroad to do so. It is of importance to note that such study was now to include experience in Western Europe and Latin America instead of the usual offering of courses in Eastern Europe. There was also interest, as so often in Cuba, in the Vietnamese approach in this area although special attention was given to the Chinese Army and its wide experience in running large business enterprises.¹¹

"Perfeccionamiento empresarial,"¹² as it was soon to be known with the arrival of the Special Period, became the slogan of the day and from the beginning had not only military elements in its thinking but was also applied to enterprises already or soon to be under military officers and direction. And here again discipline, organization, seriousness, a sense of dedication, hierarchical organization, and responsibility up and down a chain of command, were emphasized.

Rectification included not only the application of these more military elements. In addition, decentralization was seen as necessary in a number of fields. There were reductions in the size and output of some factories. Competitiveness became an acceptable word and new accounting methods, consistent with what were acceptable only as part of a "management method" and not as in any way a move toward capitalism, were brought into play.¹³ There was an admission that there were difficult to resolve fissures in the economy and in its planning as well as a wider understanding that excessive bureaucracy was making more difficult production and the functioning of the economy as a whole.¹⁴ Rectification of these problems and approaches was in the air.

Thus, when the Special Period burst on Cuba with the end of the Soviet connection as it had been developing, the FAR were already on the move back in an even bigger way into the economy and even into the management of the economic organization of the country. Ordered not only to fend for themselves but to contribute still more to the survival of the country and the Revolution in the dramatic conditions then being faced, the FAR pushed ever more forcefully into the economic fray.

The first moves were reinforcing those areas in which the FAR had long been present. These were many, but most impressively, in land use, construction, arms production, metallurgical industries, and vehicle production. As the military were in several cases already in charge of key industries, the increase in this role was less demanding than is often thought. And the government moved firmly but with caution in expanding the FAR's role. For example, while foreign capital could be used in firms under military administration, it could not take part in direct activities or production of the armed forces

themselves.¹⁵ Comparative advantage appears to have been the main factor in decisions about whether to place industries under military control rather than any idea of a direct connection between the centrality of an industry to national survival or even links with exports.¹⁶

The FAR Business System

The extensive military enterprise system we now know had, as mentioned, its infrastructure to some extent in place well before the Special Period. The previously dominant Unión de Industrias Militares (UIM) is now rather sidelined by the more profitable and dollar-oriented “GAESA” operations.¹⁷ The *Grupo de Administración Empresarial, SA* was set up under a respected and influential four-star general, the First Vice-Minister of MINFAR Julio Casas Regueiro. And it grew quickly.

Its base for expansion was, however, doubtless the UIM. Like the EJT the UIM is part of the overall military contribution to the economy and does not have the same priority or pull at present as does GAESA. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to understate its role that is, according to its earlier head General Luis Pérez Róspide himself, “to guarantee the general repair of all armaments and technical apparatus of the FAR: naval, land, and air (aircraft, submarines, ships, guns, tanks, signals equipment, etc.), to manufacture their spare parts and to produce all the light armament for the armed forces.”¹⁸

The UIM is even now made up of some 12 large industries operating out of 16 industrial installations across the country. There are some 230 factories and companies involved. The dispersal is impressive given Havana's traditional centralized role in national industry. Eight of the 14 provinces—Santiago, Camagüey, Sancti Spiritus, Villa Clara, Cienfuegos, Matanzas, Havana, and the City of Havana—house such installations. General Pérez feels the UIM maintains the traditions of the *mambí* repair shops that were interrupted by an excess dependence on the United States that had resulted in only five repair shops existing for the whole of the Cuban armed forces by 1958. He does not deny that the progress made by the Revolution in this area was largely due to a major Soviet aid program beginning in 1964 with the setting up of the General Repair Bases (*Bases de Reparación General*), the base from which the UIM's constituent parts evolved.¹⁹ But now, he says, there are no spare parts coming from the former USSR and no weapons either, although that may have changed as a result of limited arrangements made with the Russians more recently.

Thus, the job is much more difficult especially as Cuba must presumably produce at least some very moderate supply of weapons or their parts even now. In addition, despite their lessened central and publicly visible role, the UIM now has the additional responsibility to "contribute to the economic development of the country and the self-financing of the armed forces."²⁰ In this context orders were received early in the Special Period to convert a large part of the industry to civilian needs. The emphasis overall was on increased production of nickel, citrus fruit, and other foodstuffs. By 1996, some 30 percent of UIM production was for the civilian sector. It is unclear whether that trend continued although it seems quite possible that it did.²¹

Of the current pillars of the new GAESA system the most obvious other predecessor was the Grupo Geocuba, an overall group of enterprises under military control. Geocuba was made up of the Cartografía, Estudios Marinos, Imprentas, and Balizas "companies." The first of these was not only involved in the production of maps but also produced tourist and other guidebooks. To do this it had its own research cells, specialist authors, and it owned an editorial house and printing press. These were sophisticated operations of utility to the civilian market, but as in many other Latin American countries, in Cuba they were controlled by the FAR and their profits went to the armed forces. Geocuba was recently headed by Brigadier-General Eladio Fernández Cívico, but it is not clear at the time of writing if he still holds that post.

Linked to this was the Marine Studies operation that engaged in a variety of nautical research and support activities. Some of these were long in the tooth already. Others were more recent. But they covered a wide gambit of mixed naval and civilian utility.

The Imprentas operation, as its name suggests, was that dealing with a vast number of printing needs. In the past it had been involved with largely military publications, of which there were many in a highly defense-oriented society such as pre-1989 Cuba. Training manuals, political-military tracts for officers and senior NCOs, pamphlets for militia training, and much else had been printed by Imprentas presses in the past. Now they were available for moneymaking ventures as well in support of tourism, other leisure activities, transport needs, and all the rest of the widening military industry of the country.

Finally, Geocuba included a Balizas branch. This group had produced buoys and other nautical marking and related necessities for the FAR and the state in general before the new system came into play. Now it would be available to expand its operations into new areas

while also continuing to serve its former roles. But Geocuba was only to be part of the massive business structures now to be established by the FAR.

The most visible element now added to the military industries already in place was doubtless the Gaviota group of businesses. This entity is immensely present and powerful within the Cuban economy and has a major role in the vital tourism sector. Headed by General Luis Pérez Róspide, the breadth of the business is astounding and has, with the help principally of Spanish, German, and French capital, become the fastest growing tourism-related grouping in Cuba. He is, as we have seen, a former head of the Unión de Industrias Militares with vast experience in running businesses. Indeed, he was posted in to set up the UIM as part of the late 1980s rectification and SPE programs. His own job was to take the very dispersed efforts being made in the many branches of the defense industrial field at the time and unify them. He had already worked in some four of the 12 former independent industries of the new UIM and was ideally placed for the job at hand. Now he has another conglomerate of many heads under his direction.

In the first place there is Aerogaviota, a major internal airline running both scheduled and specialized flights all about the island. Operating its own airport to the west of Havana as well as much else in the interior, Aerogaviota uses military pilots, regular or reserve, as the bulk of its aircrews. These personnel are under military discipline and draw military pay (with some significant perks available). They allow the taking of considerable profits. Air fuel and much other logistical support for these undertakings is provided by the FAR as to any other military aircraft and activity.

This arrangement permits Aerogaviota to provide flights by smaller aircraft and even helicopters to more out-of-the-way places on the island. Thus, it has been able to arrange charter flights for foreign fishermen, hunters, historians, ornithologists, geographers, archeologists, and anthropologists of a variety of hues, scuba divers, explorers, and a host of others even down to military buffs keen to see the island's many castles and fortresses as well as the "no man's land" separating Cuban and U.S. forces around the latter's base at Guantánamo. Needless to say, all this has drawn in foreign exchange in significant quantities.

In addition to this aerial activity, Gaviota operates its own fleet of rather luxurious taxicabs. These are rather more expensive than the standard government-owned fleets of Panataxi, Cubataxi, Havana Taxi, and the like, and tend to be hailed only by tourists new to Cuba or by businessmen who can afford them. But they are often given

prime spots for their stands such as in front of the Hotel Nacional, Cuba's preeminent traditional grand hotel, alongside the famed Plaza de Armas (a "must" stop for all tourists visiting Havana), or in the parking area near the capital's Cathedral.

Gaviota is also responsible for running the marinas of Cuba, from the large and modern Hemingway west of Havana right down to rural ones such as Júcaro in Ciego de Ávila province (the latter being more for fishing vessels while the Hemingway is largely used by tourist sail boats). Despite the risk of running into problems with U.S. law, the presence of U.S. vessels in Cuba's marinas, especially its northern ones on the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts, is very obvious. Indeed, they likely outnumber those of any single other nation although there are many with Canadian, British (or those of nearby British dependencies such as the Cayman Islands or Turks and Caicos) and European flags flying as well. This is a growing business for Gaviota and has occasioned quite considerable investment in these marinas in recent years.

Even more striking is Gaviota's role in hotel construction and now management. Up and down the country one sees the Gaviota symbol outside hotels and enterprises serving the hotel industry. Deeply linked to international investors Gaviota has become involved in joint ventures with foreign hotel chains as well as running some by itself. Colocated discothèques, shopping centers, and restaurants help to complete the picture.

Gaviota, as a military enterprise, is also given the responsibility of running the military museums and fortresses of the island. Cuba was central to the Spanish Empire's defensive system in the Caribbean for several centuries, as we saw in chapter 1. This resulted in some of the most magnificent examples of military architecture in the whole of the Western Hemisphere. Not only are there superb examples of the eighteenth-century Vauban system of fortress construction such as the Cabañas Fortress overlooking old Havana from the hill across the harbor entrance, but there are true castles, built in the medieval style, as well.

The Morro Castle at the harbor entrance is only the best known of these edifices. Santiago de Cuba has another Morro Castle. Matanzas has a major fortress. Cienfuegos has a fine if small fortification, the Jagua "Castle," and there are others dotted along the coast of the island. Havana has much more than the two fortifications mentioned boasting as well the Atarés, Príncipe, Real Fuerza, and Punta fortresses and castles. The bulk of this network of exceptional buildings of tourist interest (not all can be visited yet as some are still very actively employed as military installations) is under the control of Gaviota. Many of the settings are still in part military so that a military enterprise

running them does not seem odd at all. But the profits are doubtless impressive in some of the most visited sites on the island and ones for which entrance fees are, by Cuban standards, high.

Less known but important too is Gaviota's running of several of Cuba's hunting lodges. Indeed, the firm is responsible for all national hunting preserves. The Spanish tradition here has died hard and a number of these exist around the island. They are currently rented out to foreign tourists who pay hard currency for access to what is doubtless the best hunting anywhere in the Caribbean islands. Gaviota also inherited the Texnotec information technology and electronics enterprise as well as operating a delivery service for the post and cargo. A car rental firm also belongs to the "holding." Little wonder then that Gaviota's many branches are credited with earning a huge portion of Cuba's total income from tourism, some suggesting 25 percent.²² But it hardly makes up the entire new and not so new military complex of companies.

SERMAR, a maritime services enterprise, provides services in two key fields related to those operating at sea. The first is its Grupo Dragados, which is responsible for dredging operations. While such services were of course available in a country with many rivers, ports, and other centers likely to be affected by silting, now they are run on a business basis for foreign firms, hotels, shipping interests, and the like. In addition, SERMAR has a ship repair service available again on a cash basis to foreigners and foreign interests operating on the island.

There is also under military direction and as part of the GAESA holding the ALMEST enterprise. It provides investment and real estate assistance. *Almacenes Universales* is owner of the large *zones franches* established in recent years in Wajay, near José Martí International Airport outside Havana, and in the port area of Mariel, well west of the city.

Last of this list, but by no means least, are the TRD, also run by the military. While few Cubans know what the letters mean, they are for *Tiendas para la Recaudación de Divisas* (Shops for the Collection of Foreign Currency). This chain of stores at one time sold rather expensive imported goods largely to tourists. But increased Cuban access to dollars from *remesas* from abroad (and more recently to Euros as well) has meant that the vast majority of customers are now Cubans. Indeed, outside the center of main tourist areas, it is rare indeed to see a foreigner in such a shop.

The TRD, as will be discussed later, are also important in providing some of the important perks that FAR personnel enjoy in these difficult times. Items that are not sold as planned are often made available directly from the shelves to members of the FAR for purchase. And it

is important to note that such sales are then *in pesos*. It is difficult to exaggerate the key potential role of such perks in reinforcing the loyalty of the FAR to the system. In addition, largely through the TRD, the FAR officer, and sometimes the other rank as well, can expect to have occasional direct access to refrigerators, televisions, air conditioners, and other modern appliances and conveniences, again on a basis of purchase in *moneda nacional*.²³

Other Military Influence in the Economy

Direct military control over industries and production is far from being the only way the armed forces have come to have such a central role in the national economy as a whole. For beyond military enterprises, UIM or more directly GAESA, are much wider influences.

Several ministries are under military men at this time. For example, the ministers responsible for the Fisheries and Merchant Marine and the Sugar Ministry are still serving officers even though both the Communications and Transport and Ports ministers are as of 2003 no longer so. Several more junior ministries have seen the same situation prevail, but it would be interesting to know if the seeming trend away from military officers is going to continue in the future.

Special among these is the Sugar Ministry.²⁴ Sugar has been the key Cuban crop and export since the eighteenth century. In 1997, General Ulises Rosales del Toro was appointed to be minister responsible for the crop at a time of a crisis of production and continuing falling prices. Rosales del Toro was a long-standing member of the Politburo, had been named chief-of-staff of the FAR in 1981, and was known to be particularly close to Raúl Castro.

In addition, the general was known for being an architect of the thinking behind the *Guerra de Todo el Pueblo* and what he called a “hyperactive defence.” In this, long before the Special Period, he called for ever increasing standards of creativity and initiative in the officer corps.²⁵ And he is considered a “soldier’s soldier” having worked his way up all the way from the lowest ranks.

The naming of General Rosales del Toro to the sugar portfolio followed his taking courses in business management in Europe, surely the highest-ranking officer in Cuba to do so. His appointment to the post of minister seemed to suggest a truly no-nonsense approach to the future of sugar production on the island. And it certainly was part of the signal that the regime was serious about tackling its economic problems and in its use of the armed forces to do so. As an aside it should be mentioned that even with Rosales del Toro at the helm, the

sugar harvest has continued its downward slide. Indeed, in 2002, there was announced a massive closing of *centrales* as part of a modernization campaign which aims to eliminate the most inefficient sugar producing centers and stimulate those parts that have proven most able to cope with modern conditions.²⁶ The general's stern but realistic hand can surely be seen at work here.

Senior FAR officers head as well the CUBANACAN tourism chain, founded early in the 1980s, the Habaneros tobacco (mainly cigar) enterprise, and the Cuban-Italian joint venture national telephone company ETECSA. Major-General Rogelio Acevedo heads the national civil aviation authority, CACSA, now a corporation and *sociedad anónima*, despite its military manager. There are in addition a number of other senior officers heading important elements of the economy connected with specific development projects.²⁷

Emergency measures are also under military control, as is of course the case in many countries. In Cuba, Brigadier-General Moisés Sio Wong is the head of what is termed the National Institute of State Reserves (*Instituto Nacional de Reservas Estatales* or INRE). The INRE accumulates resources to ensure no shortages (no easy job these days), prepares stocks of essential materials and food for cases of natural disasters, and works generally to prepare the defensive capability of the country.²⁸

In the context of the Special Period General Sio Wong insists that there was clearly a great deal of waste before. In the 1990s, the list of important strategic materials included a very Cuban twist. Alongside the usual fuel, foodstuffs, and medical supplies appear pencils, workbooks, and other materials for the school system.²⁹

In addition to all of the above it is also true that serving or retired officers also head one of the banks and manage the whole civil defense system of the country, while also having key roles in agriculture not connected to sugar production. It is thus difficult indeed to exaggerate the role of the FAR in the Cuban economy as the Special Period completes its first fifteen years.

Data and Accounting

Much of what has been said is constantly changing and is in addition little studied, discussed, or even understood. As mentioned, in Latin America data in general is often hard to come by, dubious in its accuracy, and even fabricated for political reasons. Cuba is no exception to this rule. It is also true that the shocks of the Special Period have rendered Cuban statistics even more unreliable. And of course

many of them are simply confidential, not published, or virtually impossible to find in the public domain.

If this is the case for the rest of Cuban society, it is not difficult to imagine that it is particularly so with the armed forces. The latter are by nature secretive and Cubans are no exception. Indeed the nature of U.S. pressures leading to a siege mentality, added to the Cuban government's handling of that situation, in addition to the impact of years of working with a defense establishment as closed as was that of the Soviets, have meant that the situation in Cuba in this regard is especially problematic.

Data on the armed forces are difficult to come by. We have already seen this. But data on the role of the FAR in the economy are even more so. Only Fidel and Raúl, and presumably General Casas Regueiro know how it all actually fits together. RAFIN, the financial house that handles GAESA accounts, is a closed book.

There is clearly no tax assessment made, at least none outside of the armed forces themselves. Equally, it is clear that there is no outside auditing system in use either. It can thus be said that the armed forces are in their most dramatic economic sense *autonomous*. This certainly is not to suggest that they are not fully under the command and control of Fidel Castro as commander-in-chief and of his brother Raúl as armed forces minister. But in terms of any other control, financial or otherwise, they are autonomous.

In this context, the role of Raúl Castro must be seen as absolutely central. Fidel will presumably have little to do with the daily activities of all these enterprises. With his other responsibilities he can have little time even to oversee from afar what is going on. Fortunately for him his confidence in his brother has stood the test of time and surely does in this realm as in so many others, past and present. And Raúl has understood the need to have people he can trust in all the key positions in this area of the FAR's activities just as in others such as direct commanders of the three territorially based "armies" into which the FAR are divided, and central staff jobs of importance. Indeed, a son-in-law of Raúl, Luis Alberto Rodríguez, also a serving officer, is the executive director of GAESA.³⁰

Raúl was a main stimulus to the setting up of UIM in its time, and of GAESA in its moment later on, as he was of so much else in the early economic reforms of the Special Period.³¹ Showing characteristic flexibility he has shepherded the series of reforms and changes along which have given Cuba so much as a result of the military's role, or at least so it would appear. And he has put people he can trust, and can do a good job, in any number of positions. Since 1994, his role

has seemed great indeed, and his use of those under military discipline to at least reduce previously omnipresent pilfering, combined with the transfer of successful techniques from previously military firms to the newly expanded ones, has seemed to prove generally at least more successful than previous methods.³² Accusations of inefficiency exist, of course, as they surely must. And it is difficult to believe that there is not a great deal in such vast operations. In addition, as in Central America, it is possible to suggest that civilian enterprises could have done the job better. But that is to ignore Cuban reality.

Do something like free market conditions actually apply with FAR-run enterprises? It is obvious that in the early days of the Revolution the FAR provided transport services, forced labor at low prices or even free of cost, fuel and much else to the economic efforts they were backing. And it is clear that in the early days of the Special Period the same was also the case with the FAR providing most of these same advantages to *its* enterprises. With all the advantages that such enterprises have when compared with any possible competition it is difficult to think of them as operating in anything that, domestically at least, constitutes a challenge in this regard. As if this were not enough the vast range of services available to FAR enterprises on a special basis through their very interconnectedness means that no one can truly compete with them. This author is not an economist but with luck this handling of the matter will stimulate those who truly understand these matters to attempt to answer some of these questions. There are of course other matters of interest related to the military and the economy.

Some Further Thoughts on the FAR and the Economy

Who other than the FAR could have been trusted to set up a vast economic system within Cuba which would be of the state, but that could be allowed to operate outside many of its socialist strictures? Where else could one have found the loyal personnel from whom to draw the new directors of these enterprises? Where else could one have found a disciplined body of personnel willing to organize and run these organizations with what so far appears to be a minimum of corruption, at least by current Cuban standards?

Still other questions arise. How are profits taken up and accounted for? How is success rewarded at the highest level? How are personnel selected to run these enterprises? How is the degree to which profits will go to the state central treasury or to that of the armed forces decided? And again, what is the level of corruption? Is it the serious

kind or more the usual pilfering sort so omnipresent in the Cuban society of the Special Period?

What is clear is that the armed forces have taken to the role of economic masters better than might have been imagined. The FAR are a highly professional force with a good deal of combat experience, a high sense of professional military honor and self-sacrifice, and a proud history. While generational change is of course occurring many senior and even middle-rank officers have served in internationalist missions as recently as the end of the 1980s and the very beginning of the 1990s. There can be no doubt that the priority given over to the economic role, not only in the production of foodstuffs and support for tourism, but in actually running so much of the economy, has come at a high cost in combat readiness terms. How is it then that there seems to be so little annoyance among officers, perhaps especially among the younger ranks of the officer corps, over what is happening to the profession and conceivably even to national defense as a whole? After all, in much of Latin America junior officers are shocked and disappointed by much of their seniors' role in the economy. Why does this not appear to be a serious issue in Cuba?

First, it is the view of this author that there are a number of factors involved in explaining why the armed forces take on the economic role with such alacrity and that it would be foolish to be reductionist in attempting to answer such complicated questions. All these elements must be taken into account if we are to get a proper picture of this complex matter. And answers to the questions just posed may well be found in such a wider look.

In the first place armed forces are hierarchical institutions and the FAR are no different from any other armed forces in this regard. That hierarchy makes them obey orders. And they have received orders to take over and run major elements of the national economy and they have done so. "Orders is orders" as the British Army quip goes. In addition, it should be noted that they have received those orders from the central hero of the Cuban Revolution, a man who despite his faults is respected and admired by the personnel of the FAR as no other. Fidel is a man who has fought in his own time, has been under fire (the central test for any professional military man), and has behaved himself admirably under those conditions, has led both his movement and then his country to victory not only against domestic enemies, but against the agents of the greatest power in the history of the world, and has led them in person on the battlefield. The prestige of the man, and the powerful military legitimacy of any of his orders, must thus be understood when one tries to find why his orders are, or "is," really *orders*. If Fidel orders the FAR to do

something the bulk of the FAR officer corps believe is good for Cuba and necessary to undertake for the country's good and its security, they will naturally tend to obey with alacrity. That is after all what armed forces are supposed to be largely about—discipline and obeying orders for the country's good.

It is visibly "good" for the armed forces to undertake those roles, even if the impact on their military efficiency can be brought somewhat into question through their tackling them. For there is little choice but to take on these roles if the country and revolutionary regime are to survive. And there is little doubt that the FAR's conditions as well, including those related to defensive capabilities, would be even further eroded if nothing was done. The money that the forces obtain, especially hard currency, is essential to maintain the infrastructure of the military establishment; to continue to produce some weapons, equipment, and ammunition for the institution; to purchase the fuel without which no training or defense is possible; to feed the large numbers of personnel within the force; and to hold the nation together until better times come.

Thus, while on the one hand it is surely true that these roles have eroded to at least some degree the fighting potential of the FAR, it is at least equally the case that without them the FAR would be even more of a shadow of its former self than it currently is. No armed force can prepare to fight without manpower, uniforms, ammunition, training, equipment of some kind in some sort of shape to conduct operations, and morale including some hope for potential victory. These roles bite into training, operations, and even military ethics in some ways, but they allow those same things to survive.

It must also be said that there is self-interest here as well. The officer corps of the FAR are doubtless simply better off because they and their commanders take part in these endeavors. Indeed some military managers of the new enterprises seem to run them as if they were virtually *their* private firms, although the extent to which this is the case is hard to document.³³ This is not to agree with those who feel that corruption is widespread in the FAR and especially among senior officers dealing with the vast sums connected with these activities. It is merely to say that the forces do benefit.

A swimming pool in the officers' mess is simply more likely to be repaired, not to mention filled, as a result of the FAR's access to cement, fuel, transport, repair services, special shops, and in a word, money. The conditions of the mess in general are going to be better for the same reasons. Junior officers, who certainly do not live in luxury in today's Cuba, do have something to show their spouses as concrete advantages of military service that they would not enjoy if

their husbands or wives were in any other field of endeavor. These not only include access to TRD and other goods on a special and privileged basis, but they also include some transport arrangements, access to fuel on occasion, use of *casas de descanso* (state vacation homes), mess facilities, simple access to food, and many other advantages which make military service, and marriage into military conditions, very interesting indeed.

This is not to say that Cuban officers live high off the hog while the rest of society suffers. That is not the case. The personnel of the FAR share the hardships of the rest of Cuban society at this time. But they do so with at least some elements to soften some of the blows. Their professional status as members of the military certainly makes more difficult their receipt of *remesas* when compared to that of other Cubans. It is also true that their part-time activity in work that would bring them dollars or other advantages is less easy than for others. But it is equally true that this situation is at least in part compensated for by the perks mentioned above.³⁴ And over all it is probably true that the officer in the FAR is living a slight degree above his fellow professional in the law, medicine, or engineering fields. There are all sorts of exceptions, but it is my belief that in general this assessment is sound.

Senior officers directly involved in the administration of the enterprises in question are of course a different story. Given the level of small-scale corruption so rampant in Cuba, it would be surprising indeed if some degree of taking advantage of such extraordinary access to dollars and other benefits were entirely ignored by those having it. But there are strong disincentives to doing so on a great scale. As mentioned before the Cuban police are remarkably efficient and state security services, including those within the FAR, are at least equally so. As stated by Major-General Enrique Carrera, there is the Spanish saying which goes, "pueblo chiquito; infierno grande."³⁵ That is to say, Cuba is a small island with no place to hide for the guilty. If you live excessively well, people will notice almost immediately. And Cubans being acknowledged to be classic gossips, it will quickly get out and someone will most certainly soon investigate what you are up to.³⁶ Many *paladar* and *casa privada* owners and others with access to considerable earnings can attest to this.³⁷ Thus there are major brakes on corruption at too high a level at least in terms of conspicuous current consumption if not in others of amassing wealth.³⁸

As mentioned, those caught have been punished harshly. General Ochoa's celebrated trial included charges of corruption and ill dealing in connection with foreign firms. When General Tomás Benítez, the head of Gaviota, was found guilty of accepting bribes, he was fired and imprisoned. Two full colonels from *Comercio Interior* (the internal

trade ministry) were sacked for fraud and sent to jail. There have been other cases. But the fear of such action, and the likelihood of discovery, would appear to have at least slowed the development of a level of corruption that would have doubtless become rampant in many other Latin American contexts. Corruption there clearly is. Corruption there clearly must be at some level. But few seem interested in succumbing to the worst of its temptations. And even fewer appear willing to risk discovery through the flamboyant life styles that such corruption can often permit. Thus, the symbolic impact of corruption in high places, so prevalent in the fall of the hated apparatchiks in the Soviet Union, is much less felt in Cuba. And the clear fact that most Party leaders neither dress well, nor do they eat very well, nor do they live in very fancy apartments, nor do they take luxurious holidays, all serve to keep the lid on accusations of wrong doing among the top levels of society. This includes the military as well, as we shall see in somewhat more detail later.

The FAR benefit from their connection with the enterprises they run. Some elements obviously benefit illicitly from this link. No one who knows Cuba could deny such a thing. But whether it has reached a point of excess is much less clear. As we shall see elsewhere “en Cuba todos somos ilegales” (in Cuba we are all illegal). And it is certain that the forces do not escape this fact. But it is equally certain that they are protected from some of the worst features of the present crisis, and that they often feel a special responsibility to the Revolution not to yield to temptation.

The extraordinary phenomenon of Cuban military direction of so much of the economy seems difficult to compare to that of military industries anywhere else with the possible exception of China. In Latin America there is nothing like it as is briefly referred to elsewhere in this volume. In Cuba it seems to be a long-term, if not a permanent, situation. It appears to be working reasonably well within the special circumstances of the Cuban economy at the present time.³⁹ It must surely be inefficient in many economic terms but it is obviously not in the political one of ensuring loyalty that remains key to an understanding of Fidel's policies in this as in so many other spheres.

The Weight of the Defense Effort

The defense budget of Cuba was for long declining in the years of the Special Period. This is a surprising fact but there it is. It is especially interesting in the light of the Cuban practice, common to much of Latin America, of including in the defense budget the expenses of other agencies formally under the ministry of the Armed Forces, but

actually doing work related to internal security, customs and immigration, and even the fire service. The "defense budget" is thus more of a *security* budget in Cuba. Even so, over the early years after 1989 it was in distinct and steady decline, at times seemingly in "free fall," and has even now not increased greatly despite the many security challenges Cuba has faced of late.

A little background to this question is required. The nature of Cuba's strategic context, and especially of the determined opposition of the world's superpower to its national political, economic, and social project, have meant naturally a degree of national mobilization virtually unheard of elsewhere in Latin America. This has had severe costs for the Cuban economy ever since the very early days of the Revolution in 1959. From the first mobilizations resulting from the danger of invasion from the United States, the Cuban economy has had to accustom itself to widespread absenteeism, not only of the traditional kind so damaging in Socialist countries almost everywhere, but also of the kind related to these massive national mobilizations, of a military kind and involving a huge percentage of the work force, for defense or deterrence purposes.

The demands on the economy in those early years were not merely related to labor. Military mobilization in a country only just beginning to organize proper armed forces meant borrowing vehicles from other ministries, private firms, social and economic groupings of all kinds, and even individuals.⁴⁰ Errors of all kinds were made and the military tended to take decisions, given the frequent urgency of the situation, with little regard to their effects on the economy.

Soviet assistance soon reduced the direct costs of much of the Cuban defense effort and the popularity of the regime meant that internal security costs after 1961 were not excessive. But this was to some extent misleading. The maintenance of hundreds of thousands of troops under arms, sending many of them on internationalist missions, training insurgents from other countries, and on occasion supporting them in their operations there, were all expensive indeed. And the vast reserve system, begun in 1959 but vastly expanded after 1961 and then again after the acceptance of the *Guerra de Todo el Pueblo* in the early 1980s, meant that there were many other costs to national defense beyond just those of the regular force. For reservists needed time off for training, spent more time away from their civilian job as a result of military duty, and had to study military affairs on many occasions; and all of this had a significant economic cost.

Since the beginning of the Special Period, there has been much change in emphasis in regard to this weight on the economy. The most obvious and striking change is in the armed forces being charged

themselves both with providing for their most basic needs and beyond that, contributing to the overall national recovery effort.

The security and defense budget (termed "defense and internal order" costs in the national budget) is a fascinating record of changes in priority and the flexibility of the Cuban response to crisis. In 1990 that budget was of some \$1,149 million ("moneda nacional," i.e., Cuban nonconvertible pesos). In the first year of the Special Period it fell dramatically to \$882.2 million, a collapse of about one-quarter, quite in keeping with falls in other portions of the state budget. This abrupt decline continued with the years as the Special Period proceeded to shatter Cuba in so many ways. In 1992, the defense and internal order sector received \$736.4 million and the following year, felt by many to be the bottom of the trough where the Special Period was concerned, some \$712.8 million.

In the defense and security sector there was no recovery after this time as one found, for example, in community services and sports. For 1994 saw a further fall in the security budget to some \$651.2 million and even in 1995 a fall occurred from that seemingly derisory figure to \$610.1 million. As if this series of blows were not enough, with the recovery formally well under way in 1996, the security forces saw their portion of the national budget decline in percentage terms more than in any year of the already ferocious Special Period. A further quarter of the total defense and security budget of 1995 was taken off the new year amount that ended up being a very paltry \$496.7 million. By this time virtually all other sectors were on the mend with education, public health, social security, and housing recovering best.

Thus, while there may be many accusations one can level at the Cuban government in these early years of the Special Period, one that is totally lacking in substance is that it merely wished to hold onto power and thus reinforced its entire security apparatus. No ministry suffered as much from the Special Period, in terms of its portion of the state budget or the actual figures in pesos, as did MINFAR, but defense was clearly expected to carry the bulk of sacrifices within the state agencies. Needless to say, this was closely connected with the military's increased capacity to pay its own way but that does not take away from the significance of this extraordinary state of affairs.

This is not to say that MININT did not have its own budget increased. This would be counterintuitive given the growth in the visibility, and presumably, the numerical strength of that ministry's personnel not in the countryside but very definitely in tourist centers and the capital city. The nature of the public disclosures of the defense and internal order budget does not allow one to prove this but there can be little doubt that MININT did see a considerable growth, or at

the very least no cuts, in its budget over the years of the Special Period. This would in any case merely be consistent with MINFAR's desire to distance itself from anything smacking of repressive activities. Thus, the state's ability to crack down on dissent certainly has not suffered in the Special Period.

It is worth carrying on with this analysis of the budget data a bit more. In 1997, there was a partial recovery of the security sector with its total in pesos reaching \$637.5 million. Thus, after well over half a decade of the impact of the crisis, the security sector was now to receive just over half the amount (a fraction over 55 percent) it was receiving when the Special Period was declared. But there was no trend here, merely an attempt to stave off military collapse. For the next year of 1998 the budget for defense and internal order fell back to \$537.1 million only recovering in the subsequent year of 1999 when it reached \$752.3 million. In 2000, the total for this sector of the national budget was \$879.6 million, 10 years after the beginning of the Special Period and still a mere 75 percent of the 1990 figure. In the next year, 2001 the figure was \$1,273.8 representing what might be called real growth for the first time and the amounts allocated in the next two years (2002 and 2003) fluctuated little from this total. In 2004, a slight increase was given to defense and its budget reached \$1,350 and the projected figure at time of writing was for 2005 some \$1,469 million. It must also be said that in no way was or is the purchasing power of the peso what it had been so that even these extraordinarily low figures should be understood in that context.⁴¹

This story takes place despite the vast increase in police salaries declared by Fidel in his speech of January 5, 1999, and the cost of some of the new programs of training for personnel of all the security services put into place since the Special Period's beginnings. While Cuba is doubtless still a dictatorship in many ways it is not a militarized society of the type some would like to have us believe.

For example, in those same dark years the story in education is entirely different. That sector of the state budget saw its allocated budget fall in 1991 from its high the previous year at \$1,619.5 to \$1,504 million, thus doing much better in relative terms than did its security competitor for funds. And while it continued to fall from 1992 until 1994, by 1995, early on in the national recovery, it was on the mend. Even when falling it did not do in any way as badly as the FAR, asked to become self-sufficient in so many ways in 1990. At its worst the annual budget for education (1994) remained at a highly respectable \$1,334.6 million. And by 1996 it was clearly improving with \$1,421.3 million. The next year it reached \$1,453.9 and after that grew to the 2000 figure of \$2,094.6 million. While this requires

nuance, it must be admitted that at least in terms of budgets, the priority given to education over security is powerfully evident.

In public health the story is not much different but if anything even more demonstrative of its priority. If Fidel has said that with the Special Period he had no intention of closing a single school, he had said the same about hospitals and clinics. Whereas with education the blows were successive and stunning in their impact, the state clearly did what it could to soften them. From 1990 to 1991, the public health budget fell from \$937.4 million to \$924.9 thus remaining, at least in formal terms, at 98.6 percent of its former amount. The very next year of 1992 it knew a partial recovery reaching \$938.3 million. In 1993, the rise was more obvious still with the figure allocated being \$1,076.6 million. Small ups and downs around that last figure were then the rule until 1997 when a proper recovery seemed to begin with the figure for that year at \$1,265.2 million, with 1998 at \$1,344.9 million, and 1999 with \$1,553.1 million. In 2000, the total reached some \$1,683.8 million allocated to public health.

It may be of use to give some idea of the relative position of key sectors alongside those of defense and internal security within the state budget. In 1990, the security budget represented roughly 7.1 percent of the total budget. In 2000, it stood at 5.6 percent of the total. Over those years its lowest percentage was in 1996 when it was at 3.9 percent. It may also be worthy of note that 1994-1995 came to represent the years where the chances of truly troubling internal security issues were most likely. Even then, far from finding an increase in the budgets assigned to those threats as a reaction to them in the next couple of years, one sees the opposite. This is not the normal behavior of a government in crisis, especially one so often criticized for hanging on to power only through the use of its repressive forces.

None of this means, of course, that things have been easy, for example, in health and education. The school system of Cuba is in crisis still although improved from the worst years of the Special Period in 1993-1995. The hospital situation may, if anything, be worse than that in the schools with medical supplies up, but conditions declining in many places as a result of many years of terrific underfunding. But it is clear that the FAR have in no sense been the spoiled children of the Special Period even though they have had better opportunities to face the crisis, given their own self-generated and very substantial resources as well as their general position within the state, than either the medical or educational structures. But even allowing for this, and despite all the threats to the state, the Revolution and the country, defense and internal order have simply not seen their budget priority

rise. Indeed, given the severe cuts in the FAR, it is rather the opposite that has been allowed to happen.

To act otherwise would have meant that the government was truly giving massive priority merely to its own hold on power. At the same time, it must be said that a wise statesman like Fidel was more than likely to clearly see the links between the stability of his government and the maintenance of the *logros* (gains) of the Revolution of which he and most of his people are so proud, and upon which the latter so obviously depend. Giving priority to defense would have been the proof that the opposition needed that this is merely one dictatorship more, with a bankrupt social and economic policy, and a determination simply to blindly hang onto power. That argument is far from a convincing one in the light of the realities of government priorities over the last more than dozen years. All this does emphasize that the FAR do not constitute the drain on the nation's resources one might expect in an island embargoed by its neighboring superpower but determined to ensure an adequate defense while beset with extremely serious internal difficulties across the board.

The Question of Corruption

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are of course accusations within Cuba and without that, as so often when Latin American militaries take charge of industries, there must be widespread corruption among those in charge of such activities. And this matter, alluded to briefly earlier in a wider context, must be addressed in more detail here. This corruption of the military must be especially true, so the argument goes, in Cuba where such a large number of these enterprises have been formed recently and where the military role in their functioning is so central and all pervasive. And if not, how can we explain that the experience lived by the Brazilian, Central American, Uruguayan, Peruvian, and so many other Latin American republics during their periods of military direction of so many firms and other commercial activities has not been that lived in Cuba?

There is also the question of low-level corruption, a point alluded to earlier. That is, if there is relatively little corruption at the highest level of direction and command, is there not still much of it farther down the chain of command? After all, Cuba is a land of extremely widespread low-level pilfering if not outright theft at the moment and it would be unusual under such difficult conditions as are lived by virtually all Cubans if the FAR's personnel did not become tempted by some of the same illegal activities that suggest themselves to so much of the rest of Cuban society.

It is interesting to note again that the official rations, emoluments, and allowances accorded to senior officers of the armed forces do not differ at all from those for the general public. And officers of senior rank are extremely offended at the very suggestion that they are somehow privileged in this regard.⁴² Instead they state with pride that despite their rank, they confront the same restrictions as do other Cubans.

There is doubtless much truth in this assertion. As mentioned elsewhere one does not often see senior officers of the FAR in the clothes of the wealthy or eating at the best restaurants in the cities of the island, unless they are being hosted by foreigners or are in charge of enterprises where such activities are on occasion necessary. Nor does one see them driving in posh motorcars except, again, where those cars are on official military or at least commercial business. Very senior officers do tend to have cars but it is not by any means the case that they always own a motor vehicle. When those vehicles are their own they usually double for business purposes as well as personal. And it must be said that many retired people from all walks of life on the island have received cars from the state as a result of good service. It would be odd indeed to have senior officers on active duty not have access to the vehicles they need to effectively do their job. And the nature of business in general in Cuba, and in this military-run business is no exception, as well as the general state of transport, ensures that it is usually necessary for senior officials to have a car, or at least access to one.

Cubans do on occasion resent seeing senior officers driving past them in the Mercedes-Benz and other luxury cars the Cuban state has procured in recent years. But these officers tend to be the most senior in the FAR and have the highest responsibilities in the state. This is not the *apparatchik* phenomenon so common in the Soviet Union and most of Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s where thousands of senior government staff and Party members had their vacation houses on the seaside, swank apartments in the city, posh cars to drive, servants, as well as many other privileges absolutely absent from the life of the bulk of the public. In Cuba senior officers generally live very modestly indeed by the standards of their counterparts almost anywhere. If they have cars they are not impressive. They do not live in accommodation significantly above the levels of the general population. And they have neither servants nor homes in the country provided by the state.

This does not, however, mean that they have absolutely no privileges, as we have seen. Officers' messes are generally comfortable places for their members to relax and often have swimming pools for

them and their families. There is no such option for the public although it must be said that public pools are available in most population centers of any size in the country. They have good hospitals, often better supplied than those available to the general public.⁴³ They are of course assured three adequate meals each day. This is certainly not the case for much of the population, especially those with no access to dollars. Clothes for work in general are provided although as in most armed forces, some items must be bought by the individual himself. This is of course also not the usual case for the man in the street although many Cubans do receive work clothes or an allowance in lieu of them. But having said all this, it would be highly inaccurate to see the senior officer of the armed forces as a greatly privileged person. His work is hard and demanding. His house or flat is very basic indeed. His food, while likely to be constant, is hardly luxurious or abundant. And his transport needs are, like other Cubans although to a lesser degree no doubt, only with difficulty met.

Thus, the Cuban senior officer does not seem a very close cousin of many of his Latin American counterparts. Cuba has since the Revolution no longer been a country of a polo-playing officer corps alongside a population much of which was living in poverty. This raises the question of less senior officers. As just seen, they are much less likely to have a car than in the rest of the region, and are seen every day facing the transport crisis of the country just as their fellow citizens in civilian clothes do. Even quite senior officers of lieutenant colonel and colonel rank can be found almost all the time "boteando" (hitching rides in whatever transport is available) and this is of course at least as true for their more junior colleagues.

Junior officers are not poorly paid by national standards. However, as discussed, national standards of pay and national standards of cost of living are only vaguely connected. And as for all members of the security services, so for the junior officer, there are difficulties. It is vital for living in a decent fashion for someone in the family to have access to dollars. And while this is particularly true in the cities it is still generally, to some extent at least, true for rural living as well. Members of the security services are of course the symbols of legality for a population in which "todos somos ilegales" is a byword of national life. For the bulk of the population dollars can only be obtained illegally, if they are not got through "remesas," tips from foreigners for services in tourist locations, and the like. Thus, a huge percentage of the population is selling goods or services illegally, or doing other things outside the law, in order to obtain the means to live decently. Under such circumstances that portion of the population is in an illegal situation. FAR, MININT, PNR and other security services personnel cannot

easily become involved in such activities for moral, professional, and legal reasons and some implications of this were discussed earlier. But given that it is extremely difficult to live decently without becoming involved in these activities, those personnel do have special problems.

The junior officer is typically a professional, dedicated young man or woman, anxious to do well in his or her career and keen to do a good job in general. He or she is well educated and likely to take on more education and advance through that means. The lifestyle that person hoped for in joining the FAR was one far from privilege but which nonetheless offered some of the favorable elements mentioned just above. And while the Special Period has dealt severe blows to that lifestyle, the junior officer can still expect some cushioning from some of its worst effects. It is nonetheless morale destroying to see others, literally all around one, doing illegal things and therefore living better, even far better, than oneself. And this is a major source of frustration to all people in Cuba who try to keep within the law, but especially to young people in the security services. This produces some important temptations for them in the sense that many of their jobs put them into positions where such illegal activities are taking place. The opportunities for corruption in the accepting of bribes, extortion, protection racketeering, and in many other forms are often there. And when all around one there are people taking advantage of the situation it is difficult to see why one should not do so oneself.

Thus, the PNR in particular has suffered many cases of petty bribery and some of bribery on a much larger scale. The authorities move quickly and somewhat savagely when they discover it, a situation wildly different from most of Latin America, but the omnipresence of temptation in the midst of great need often does its work. The fact is that for the first time in post-1959 Cuban history the security forces abound in people taking bribes in something near the classic Latin American fashion.

The differences are, however, still important. Informal interviews have eventually convinced me that very few of those bribes are large. Even fewer of them are demanded although there are ways of passing the message that a "regalito" (little gift) for an official would be appreciated without his actually asking for it. And by far the largest portion of them are in the form of small favors such as a soft drink purchased for a policeman, a few bars of soap for a Customs agent, a little gasoline for a FAR or MININT officer with access to a car. This is the stuff of most Cuban corruption at the moment, and it is of course arguable that this is not corruption at all, particularly in the dreadful circumstances of the Special Period. But all these activities to some extent undermine the morale of the armed forces as well as the

other security forces and especially the police. The young FAR officer is expected to remain pristine "clean" under these circumstances, even when the families and friends of counterrevolutionaries are doing very well for themselves. It is not easy for him. And this situation will require careful watching both by the FAR (and other security services) leadership and by observers who wish to understand what is happening within the security forces. And the powerful exposure of officers to such temptations so obvious in industries run by them means that such observation will have to be keen.

The Military and the Economy

As often discussed above it is not entirely clear whether the Special Period is over yet. Thus some of the questions one would normally ask about the future military role in the Cuban economy have been left in abeyance. After all, wartime economies are curious things at the best of times as most Western democracies discovered in the two world wars of the twentieth century. And the Special Period has many of the aspects generally seen in wartime.

Some final thoughts merit attention here. The first is to emphasize again that the Special Period has seen a gigantic step forward in the armed forces role in the economy but it has not been witness to its beginnings. Rather that growth is part of the revolutionary tradition of the FAR and can be linked, if only vaguely, to *mambí* practice in times of severe challenge going back a century and a half into national history, and much more directly to a Rebel Army pressed into service in the economy in the early years of the Revolution. The FAR are shaken by these additional tasks but in a profound sense they are not at all *surprised* at being allotted them.

In that sense it would be wrong to see this connection as temporary. The Special Period is certainly very "special" but Cuba's overall situation is very special as well and that state of affairs would not necessarily end merely as a result of the end of this "period." The connection goes back at least to 1959 and the role given to the armed forces in the emergency conditions of that time. Thus, the end of the Special Period may not necessarily result in any great change to an economic role for the armed forces in Cuba although some reform would be most likely.

As Central American, Ecuadorean, and much other Latin American experience shows us it is easier to get the military into the economy than it is to get them out. And while Cuba's context differs dramatically from those of the Central American and other Latin American republics, this situation is likely to prevail on the island as well.

Created interests, and the sheer power of the armed forces, are likely to ensure this. Even so, the FAR are a military institution and will obey orders. This is especially the case if those orders are coming from the commander-in-chief and so, in this as in so much else, nothing is impossible in Cuba and there is no guarantee that the FAR role in the economy will outlive the Special Period. But barring very strange conditions indeed, a continuing major place for the military in Cuba's economy is virtually certain over the near and medium term.

What we have seen in this chapter is the story of institutional flexibility and initiative, linked to the advantages of proven loyalty and relative efficiency, at the disposal of the Cuban government in what is probably its time of greatest challenge so far. The FAR are almost certainly doing more than their share to preserve the present Cuban state and their role in the economy seems to be almost as important to that goal as their role in national defense. But in Cuba the two are inextricably mixed and into that mixture comes a diplomatic role as well. And to that we can now turn.

Chapter 5

The FAR and the United States: Confidence Building in Limited but Important Sectors

This chapter deals with confidence building and confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the context of the ongoing dispute between the United States and Cuba over a wide range of historic, political, and economic matters.¹ The very idea of a look at such an activity as confidence building in such an intractable and long lasting conflict may strike the reader as, to say the least, odd and perhaps even foolhardy. After all, one side sees the other as determined to destroy it at whatever cost and however long it takes, while the second party sees its opponent as an incorrigibly evil regime in which one can never have any real faith.² This is not the stuff of which normal confidence building is generally constructed.

Despite the above, this chapter will argue that there is a kind of confidence building already in place, and showing signs of further useful roles, between the United States and Cuba. It will point to a series of measures, unilateral or bilateral, and even some in multilateral contexts, which can be seen as confidence building and will insist on the absolutely central role of the armed forces in the “process.” And finally it will argue that specific sectors of the elites or decision-makers in both the United States and Cuba are involved in CBMs that may not reflect the official view of either side, but which are nonetheless building confidence between those key sectors and having a wider positive influence still.

In doing so, this chapter looks at a series of questions. In what sense can one speak of confidence building, and CBMs in the Cuba–U.S. context? What is the background to any confidence building now being done in the Cuba–U.S. relationship and what is its

current status? What has such confidence building actually achieved in terms of the generally recognized objectives of CBMs? And where do the FAR fit into the process?

Confidence building, for the purposes of this analysis, will be taken to be those actions, usually thought of today as “first-generation CBMs,” referred to in the definition developed by Canadian expert and theoretician on confidence building James Macintosh in his early five-part description of them:

- CBMs involve a variety of arms control measures entailing state actions that can be unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral;
- CBMs attempt to reduce or eliminate misperceptions about specific military threats or concerns by communicating verifiable evidence that those concerns are groundless;
- CBMs demonstrate that military and political intentions are not aggressive;
- CBMs provide early-warning indicators to create confidence that surprise will be difficult to achieve;
- CBMs restrict the opportunities for the use of military force by adopting restrictions on the activities and deployments of those forces within sensitive areas.³

Macintosh insists later on that the objective of confidence building is to move toward a “transformation” of the overall view of the opponent in the minds of key decision makers on the other side of the conflict. Thus, purely military CBMs can be only part of the story and political, economic, and wider cultural measures can also be set in place to reach the goal. These are usually termed “second-generation” CBMs although there is considerable blurring of the lines between the two at the moment.

This chapter will suggest that in the Cuba–U.S. context key sectors of the elite and decision making community have been affected by what can quite easily be seen as CBMs.⁴ And it will be further asserted that this has indeed had an effect on the evolution of the relationship and wider political and security decisions taken by the two sides. In the view of this author, what may be called the “sectoral” issue has been insufficiently addressed so far in the literature on CBMs, and hardly at all on writing on the Cuban–U.S. relationship. That is, even where there has been no overall or decision-maker transformation of views where the opponent is concerned, there may be important sectors of that elite or of those decision makers who have indeed had their views affected. And those sectors may make their views heard and insist upon having them respected. In the case studied here it has

been found that both of these apply, and the role of the U.S. security forces, and the FAR, in all this, is difficult to exaggerate.

The Evolution of the Cuba-U.S. Relationship up to 1959

It is now necessary to give a more complete, if still of necessity brief, overview of the nature of the Cuba-U.S. conflict than that taken as a given so far. It often comes as something of a surprise to discover that Cuba and the United States have had a mutual interest in one another since well before either of their independence movements. Trade between the Spanish colony and the northern British colonies, most of which would eventually make up the United States, had been important at various times in the 17 decades of shared colonial status. The Floridas, bordering on what was eventually to become Georgia, were still Spanish and were in a close relationship with Cuba, the heart of Madrid's Caribbean empire, and the administrative center for long responsible for these most northern imperial outposts.⁵

The relationship was, however, very limited in these early years. It was only with U.S. independence that there developed a relatively sustained interest on the part of that new country in the Pearl of the Antilles. In the War of Independence of 1775-1783 the Spanish actively supported the rebels from their base on the island and special arrangements for trade were made permitting that which had flourished a decade and a half earlier to resume strongly. Indeed, U.S. privateers even were allowed to use Cuba as a major base for their operations deep into the British West Indies.⁶ Spanish forces in 1779, under the able leadership of General Bernardo Gálvez y Gallardo, advanced into the Floridas eventually driving the British out of those recently acquired territories, thus securing the new nation's southern flank in ways that proved unattainable in the north.⁷ Then from early in the nineteenth century Thomas Jefferson and other U.S. statesmen made clear the interest Washington would have in acquiring the island from Spain, or in times of distress, the need existing to ensure the colony did not fall into other, especially French or British, hands. Schemes for purchase of the nearby island were put forward at various times, especially when Spain was hard pressed, economically or politically (or both), during the nineteenth century. And while always rejected, the issue of acquisition of Cuba never entirely disappeared from U.S. foreign policy.⁸

As the popularity of the nationalistic and expansionist concept of "Manifest Destiny" gained ground with the American public in the mid-nineteenth century, this interest grew. And this state of affairs

was complicated by the utility that Cuba represented for the slave states of the American Union as a potential future partner in keeping the balance between "slave" and "free" states within the U.S. political system of the time.⁹ Southern politicians, facing westward "free" state expansion as well as more rapidly growing voting populations in those same states (crucial for balance in the U.S. Congress), could ill afford not to consider options such as that offered by a Cuba fully incorporated into the Union.

When the U.S. expansionist drive failed to achieve the annexation of Canada in the War of 1812, U.S. eyes turned increasingly to the south. Spain's desperate situation during the Napoleonic Wars provided the opportunity to acquire the Floridas, which then included the southern portions of Mississippi and Alabama as well, by what was essentially a military *coup de main*.¹⁰ This was followed by growing pressure on Mexico ending with the conquest or enforced purchase of roughly half of that country in the first half of the century. Spain was therefore, to say the least, wary of U.S. pretensions where Cuba was concerned, especially when the mother country was shorn of all its other American territories barring Puerto Rico in the independence wars of 1808-1826.¹¹

Most U.S. administrations held, despite temptations from time to time, to the long-established policy of the "ripe fruit" falling to the ground. That policy held as its basis that Cuba would come into the U.S. orbit automatically over time and that an active policy aiming at that result would be counterproductive.¹² It would be so in part of course because such deep anti-imperialist tendencies remained in the U.S. public after the experience of colonial status under Great Britain. But it would also be so because any seizure of the island would probably mean a costly war with Spain that, while almost certainly seeing the United States victorious, might cost more than it was worth and be highly divisive politically as well.

The important thing, then, was to keep the island out of the hands of the British and, if this meant leaving it by preference in the hands of a ramshackle and totally nonthreatening Spanish empire, then so be it. U.S. policy was thus to leave well enough alone, enjoy increasing economic ties with the island that, by 1898, made the northern republic several times more important an economic partner of Cuba than was its own mother country, and wait to see what events would eventually bring the island entirely into the U.S. sphere.¹³

Only after a series of incidents, the United States and Spain went to war three years into the newly ignited Cuban-Spanish struggle. The former's intervention was decisive and in a few short months what was left of the Spanish Empire in the Americas, and indeed in Asia as well,

was gone. The United States now occupied the island for four years but the imperialist wing of public opinion was unable to gain acceptance for an actual permanent incorporation of Cuba into the Union or into a formal imperial structure. Nonetheless, through the Platt Amendment the United States retained the right to intervene in Cuba at any time it felt its interests were threatened and with this restriction, Cuba got a "second independence," if far from a full one, in 1902.

It must be said that in reality Cuba was rather more a client state than an independent one, especially up to 1934 when, as part of President Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy" the U.S. right to intervene in Cuba was formally dropped by Washington. By then, U.S. investment was absolutely dominant on the island especially as U.S. investors bought up bankrupt Cuban and Spanish *hacendados'* lands in the wake of the damage caused by the 1895–1898 war and the ruin that so many of those landholders faced as a result.¹⁴ The U.S. administration of the island, like the U.S. government and public itself, was divided as to what to do with the new territory during the first intervention of 1898–1902. It proved impossible to fully incorporate the island into the Union but it proved equally impossible to make it a protectorate after the model of Puerto Rico.

Thus, the civil and military administrations in place tried to take such measures in Cuba as to ensure that the island became either in effect part of the United States, or even that its large conservative upper class came to desire such a status itself, something that was far from unimaginable in the years in question. The government set up by the United States, and its army was one that was edged into policies that moved the island steadily in this direction.¹⁵

By the 1930s, and even before, the United States was in a position of total economic and political dominance in the island with the vast majority of foreign investment holdings, the bulk of imports and exports, and a large number of local politicians, in its hands as well. The U.S. Ambassador could accurately report that he was either the most important man in the country or at worst, the second most. U.S. recognition was the *sine qua non* of a government staying in power, however it came to hold it. Democracy remained a sham and gangsterism and corruption became rampant by the 1940s and the 1950s.¹⁶

Growing levels of tourism, leading to one of the first cases of "mass" tourism known, also helped anchor the links that have been analyzed very well indeed by Louis Pérez.¹⁷ Wartime alliance with the United States in 1917–1918 and again in 1941–1945, in the latter underwritten by Lend-Lease, ensured a modernization and in effect a remaking of the Cuban armed forces even more along the U.S. model.¹⁸ And this helped to keep the central military institution of the

republic deeply antinationalist at least where the relationship with the great neighbor was concerned.¹⁹ Thus, Cuban nationalism was stifled and lagging in its development despite the heroism and length of the struggle against Spain. And there were precious few in the United States who understood that the smothering of that normal expression of *Cubanía* might be so unnatural as to bring dire results over time.²⁰ Batista's government, coming to power by *coup d'état* in 1952, on the very eve of the José Martí Centenary, came to be the living symbol of all these woes.

The Cuba-U.S. Relationship From 1959 Till Today

In this context the opposition 26th of July Movement, headed by the young lawyer Fidel Castro Ruz, began to operate in 1953.²¹ While Castro had quickly gained considerable sympathy in some U.S. circles, his series of reverses from 1953 until 1957 made many doubt the potential for success of his movement. Fortune began to shine at least to some degree on his rebels in the mountains and the urban guerrillas in many of the main cities of the island in 1957. And on New Year's Eve 1958, the then dictator Fulgencio Batista fled the country and the next week saw Fidel take effective power. It quickly became clear that what he had said in his main political statement *La Historia me absolverá* was indeed his real political program and putting it into rapid effect his real intention. Dramatic reform was to be the order of the day and such reform would necessarily affect adversely U.S. interests.

The unfortunate story of the rapid decline of U.S.-Cuban relations during 1959 and 1960 is too complex to detail here. However, in essence, in a series of moves and countermoves demonstrating increasing frustration and impatience on both sides, economic relations between the two countries were brought to a virtual standstill, political links envenomed, and an eventually vast migration of at first largely upper middle-class Cubans began most especially to the United States, and also to selected Latin American countries and Spain.

The Cuban government drifted steadily to the left. It remains unclear whether this was Castro's original intention or whether U.S. policies "forced" him in that direction. Be that as it may, major U.S. investments in the country were nationalized and the arrangements for compensation were considered totally inadequate in Washington. Agrarian reform was especially unacceptable in the form implemented by the new government. In January 1961, diplomatic relations were finally broken.

Over the months before that date, the United States had used the economic weapon with great vigor cutting first Cuban sugar quotas and then by implementing a steadily harsher embargo on Cuban exports and imports as a whole. Given the dependence of Cuba on the U.S. economy, the result was devastating. After attempting to find alternative arrangements in some areas with Western Europe and the Americas, including in the crucial area of arms supplies, Havana finally turned to a policy of closer relations with the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact nations.²² It seems clear that Fidel was disposed to do this to some degree in any case but the circumstances and timing were certainly not those he would otherwise have chosen.

For the next decade and a half the bilateral relationship was truly in the deep freeze. Cuba openly supported the Soviet Union in international affairs, the Revolution was formally declared to be "socialist," the Communist Party became the official embodiment of the state, and the economy made thoroughly statist. From 1962 to 1968, in the face of a coordinated effort to isolate it in the Americas, Havana openly engaged in an "export of revolution" phase in Latin America and even more widely in the world.²³ Cuban volunteers took part in other leftist revolutions, some under the leadership of the legendary Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Cuba trained, armed, and supported leftist insurgencies in Central America, the Caribbean, and throughout much of South America, not to mention in Africa where the Cuban role exceeded anything one might have imagined for a country of its size and resources.

The United States not only watched with growing annoyance this situation but also moved dramatically to counter Fidel's growing influence. President John F. Kennedy's much trumpeted "Alliance for Progress" was mounted in direct response to the Castro challenge in Latin America and accompanying it came the largest level of support for Latin American armed forces, and especially for their counterinsurgency efforts, ever deployed in peacetime to the region. Washington was to tolerate even the most savage dictatorships if it could count on their opposing Havana. And as mentioned elsewhere the inter-American system was brought sharply to heel and successfully pressured into isolating Cuba within the region.

On the other hand, Soviet and later Comecon arrangements gave Cuba a favored place in the "socialist division of labor." Cuba continued, despite Fidel's initial intentions laid out in "History Will Absolve Me" to diversify the economy, to specialize in the export of sugar, a fact that was to have enormous consequences for the country later on. The upper and middles classes disappeared altogether in the context of deep reforms, which did work miracles in Cuban education, gender

relations, health, sport, culture, racial affairs, and housing even if at a heavy price.

Cuba entered the headlines repeatedly and almost always in a situation of direct clash with the United States. And it did so in exceptional circumstances in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 when the Soviet Union's dispatch of offensive missiles to the island brought NATO and the Warsaw Pact to the brink of nuclear war. During these years the United States tried repeatedly to unseat the Cuban government. Organizing, arming, training, and otherwise supporting Cuban exile movements on U.S. territory and off, Washington sent the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion force to its destruction in April 1961.²⁴ The CIA became involved in repeated plots to eliminate, physically on some occasions, Castro and his government. And the boycott of Cuban goods was extended in such dramatic fashion that the Cubans could soon speak with at least some sort of accuracy of a *blockade* rather than a simple embargo.²⁵

In essence the relationship could hardly have been worse. And even when the export of revolution phase ended in the late 1960s, relations did not really improve. When elements of the U.S. government were tempted to normalize relations, such as when air piracy became a serious problem for the United States in the late 1960s and 1970s, the electoral strength of the exile community in Florida and elsewhere ensured that to this temptation there would be little yielding. And although there was some common approach over the specific issue of aerial piracy, where Cuba supported the United States to a remarkable degree over a sustained period, the limited nature of shared view was made clear to all by the extent to which "Miami," as short-hand described the Cuban diaspora in the United States, held captive Washington's policy toward the island.

This situation seemed to be close to changing with the new government of Jimmy Carter in the mid- to late-1970s. Real discussions were begun between Washington and Havana on the resumption of relations. The official U.S. reason given for attempting to reopen a dialogue could have been taken from a handbook on CBMs: "We have been moving to restore communications with Cuba for a very simple reason: None of the many serious problems that concern us in our relations with Cuba have been solved—or can be solved—by isolation? We stand a better chance of achieving these objectives through quiet negotiation and reciprocal moves toward cooperation than through inflexible hostility and a continuing refusal even to talk."²⁶

With this approach there were certainly some positive changes in the relationship with some humanitarian gestures made, and the opening of special interests sections of the two countries in one another's

capitals. But no real breakthrough occurred.²⁷ And what the United States saw as continued and indeed increasing Cuban trouble making on the international scene, and especially in Africa, combined with a general hardening of Carter's foreign policy in order to face the Reagan electoral challenge, combined to put paid to this hopeful initiative.²⁸

The 1980s were marked by a return to the even poorer relations of the past. Despite his moderating role in a series of Central American conflicts, Castro continued to be seen as a pariah in the Americas by Washington.²⁹ Indeed, a new low was reached when Cuban and U.S. personnel actually fought one another briefly during the U.S. invasion of Grenada in 1983. This was the only time this was ever to happen.³⁰

The relative strength of Cuba's strategic position was by the middle of the decade reducing rapidly. The visible decline of the Soviet Union, its priority desire for better relations with the United States, its new policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, which were at times incomprehensible and then anathema to the Cuban government, all pointed to trouble ahead for Castro. In general, the communist movement worldwide was in trouble with Eurocommunism, the Chinese challenge, failures of all kinds in the Soviet system, and general "aging" seeming to affect massively the Soviet Union's leadership of the system, with many Third World countries abandoning not only Moscow but their own socialist experiments, China well out of the Soviet orbit, and the Reagan "roll back" offensive of communism in full swing.³¹ As if all this were not bad enough, Cuban economic performance continued unimpressive despite a major program of *autocrítica* giving the lead to a process of *rectificación* of errors.³²

Cuban-U.S. Relations and the "Special Period"

These early blows were as nothing, however, when compared with the impact of the events of 1989-1991. The end of the Warsaw Pact and Comecon, and then of the Soviet Union as a superpower *tout court*, spelled massive change in the Cuba-U.S. relationship as well.³³ The most intransigent elements in the United States became keener still to put paid to the Revolution once and for all. And many in Miami and even in Washington began to feel that this objective could be reached with virtually no effort and conceivably with not much suffering on the part of the Cuban people.³⁴

As we have seen, the limiting and then the end of cooperative arrangements of great value to Cuba with Eastern Europe was the first major blow and came quickly with the fall of communist regimes all over that region in the autumn of 1989. Almost as important, however,

were the results of bilateral agreements between Moscow and Washington that pulled the rug out from under Cuban efforts to support leftist movements in Central and South America and the Caribbean.³⁵ The Sandinista government in Nicaragua, Cuba's only real friend in the Americas by the end of the 1980s, fell in the elections of February 1990, producing a further feather in the U.S. right's sense of what Fidel quickly dubbed "triumphalism" in Washington. The leftist coalition of forces fighting the government in El Salvador and Guatemala engaged in serious negotiations for an end to that conflict. Elsewhere the left was increasingly discredited as at worst evil and at best irrelevant to the future.

As we have also seen, the end of the socialist division of labor was an absolute disaster for Cuba. The country would now have to deal with the Soviet Union on a cash and carry basis, something that in effect meant the end of almost all the bilateral arrangements, some of which had been in place for well over a quarter of a century. And the end of the Soviet Union meant the disappearance of the major ideological and economic support of the Cuban state. Locked into a state-run economy whose role was in the main the supply of sugar, itself a product with a highly questionable future, Cuba now had lost its main markets and even its key sources of imports.

The impact has already been looked at briefly. But it is important to emphasize again the scale of the blow. The Cuban economy simply reeled. The Soviets had taken in the last period of special arrangements 63 percent of Cuba's exports of sugar, 73 percent of its nickel, 95 percent of its citrus, and 100 percent of its electrical components. For the same period they sent Cuba 63 percent of its food imports, 98 percent of its fuel, 80 percent of its machinery, and 74 percent of its imports of other manufactured goods. This exceptional situation disappeared almost overnight with Cuba losing about 80 percent of its total international purchasing power. Imports fell by a shattering 70 percent in only two years. In the period 1959-1988 some 87 percent of Cuban trade had been with the socialist bloc. By 1994 the figure stood at 12 percent, and this was a percentage of a by now vastly reduced total. In addition, in an even more sustained way, the prices of almost all major exports (citrus, tobacco, sugar, tobacco) fell with only nickel temporarily holding its own. The social costs were staggering. Over the years 1989-1993, the Cuban per capita diet lost 40 percent of its protein, 64 percent of its fat, 62 percent of its vitamin A, 62 percent of its vitamin C.³⁶

The result for U.S.-Cuban bilateral relations was quick to present itself. Two schools of thought appeared. One suggested that the supposedly rotten fruit was about to fall anyway, so that there was no

reason to pursue an active policy in order to achieve that collapse. The other said that the moment had come to put the *coup de grace* to Fidel and that as a result the embargo should be strengthened and all other possible initiatives should be undertaken to topple the government in Havana. Both had their day. The U.S. government did not move quickly to take advantage of the situation. However, extremist members of the legislature did over time move their own agenda forward. The Cuban Democracy Act of 1991, generally termed the Torricelli Act, tightened the embargo massively. Ships of third countries dealing with Cuba could not put into a U.S. harbor for six months after any Cuban port call, a heavy price for shippers who had to consider a U.S. market hundreds of times more important than the Cuban. Many humanitarian and cultural activities still permitted by U.S. law to take place between the two countries were abolished. The *Trading with the Enemy Act*, already in force where Cuba was concerned, was reinforced.

Over the years from 1992 to early 1996, however, the ability of the Cuban government to weather the storm impressed many and there was an evolution of public thinking in the United States on the subject of Cuba. Polls began to show that most U.S. citizens favored a normalization of relations with Cuba. Trade and investment circles included many exporters, especially in agriculture, anxious to get into the Cuban market. NGOs and humanitarian, church, sports, and cultural groups pressed for revisions in the policy being applied.

Then came February 1996. The "Brothers to the Rescue" incident, where two small exile planes illegally flying to Cuba were shot down by Cuban jets, brought the opportunity for the hard-liners not only to hold their own but also to counterattack. For months there had been before Congress an extraordinarily tough piece of legislation with the express intention of toppling the Havana government and excluding the Castro family from power even if one day one of its members were to be democratically elected. The Helms-Burton Bill, intended to get tough on all those "trafficking" with Cuba in investment or trade terms, and of accelerating markedly the fall of the government, passed Congress. The embargo was tightened still further, and foreign investment was discouraged since U.S. nationals who had seen their holdings nationalized in the early years of the Revolution could now undertake court actions against foreigners who purchased those assets. Even more extraordinary was the provision that these arrangements would apply to Cubans who had not even been U.S. citizens at the time of nationalization.

At first such an exaggerated piece of legislation, certain to be rejected by the international community and within it by some of the closest allies of the United States, seemed doomed to congressional

defeat.³⁷ Even if it did pass, firm rumors in Washington abounded that it would be vetoed by President Clinton on the basis of foreign and security policy priorities. But the shooting down of two civilian aircraft pushed Congress to adopt the legislation whatever its failings. As expected, the bill was criticized almost everywhere in the strongest language as against international law and completely contrary to the free trade and economic integration language that was the basis of U.S. policy worldwide. Investment continued to flow into Cuba and a number of international and national initiatives, some of the latter similar to some extent to countervailing legislation passed earlier in the face of the Torricelli initiative, were taken to reduce the impact of the bill's provisions.

Be that as it may, there is little doubt that the bill has done Cuba great damage. While denounced by almost the entire international community, it doubtless had a major discouraging effect on capital movement to Cuba. Many investors simply prefer not to look for problems with the United States. So although investment is continuing, and is reaching out into new areas, there is less of it than there would otherwise have been. And while it is true that fits and starts and uncertainties in the Cuban government about what to do about foreign investment have slowed the process as well, few observers doubt the at least partial efficacy of the Helms-Burton Bill. If it has failed in its major objective of bringing down the government in Havana, its "enabling" objective of squeezing Cuba in order to raise discontent by a significant measure, in the view of this observer, has achieved its goal.

Thus, the embargo was to be stronger than ever, aimed directly at ousting Fidel and applied at whatever the cost involved to U.S. prestige and foreign policy. Relations were now as bad as ever. The death shortly thereafter of the main extremist leader in the exile community, Jorge Mas Canosa, did slowly allow for more discussion of other options among Cuban Americans. But the reality was that hard-liners continued to dominate the discussion in that community and given U.S. electoral realities, no more liberalizing trends were likely to have a major impact in the short term.

Cuba and Confidence Building

Cuba reached independence over three quarters of a century after the rest of Latin America, and that independence was more formal than real for a very long time after 1902. Thus Cuban experience in international relations is really rather short. Its foreign service has only been a professional one in anything but name since after the 1959

Revolution and the isolation imposed on the island by U.S. policies since that year has meant that it is fair to say that Cuban experience is not only short, but also rather limited in many senses. It is also true that Cuba's main collaborators in the recent past have either disappeared or are themselves under something like siege. This does not mean in any way that Cuba's diplomats are not highly professional. They usually are. Nor does it mean that U.S. objectives of isolating the country have worked. They have not in any formal sense, with Havana having diplomatic relations with almost all countries, some 177 at this author's last count. But the nature of the battle for survival, of the propaganda elements of Cuba's international stances, and of the degree Cuba still matters deeply in foreign affairs are such that, as we see elsewhere in this volume, Cuba is not very able to fully profit from the connections she has. This has to do more with power politics, of course, than it does with any lack of diplomatic professionalism.

While China is in many senses doing well, the government there feels neither entirely secure nor in many ways particularly strong. Vietnam's credentials as in any real sense communist are fading fast. Communist states have disappeared from Europe. And there is nothing approaching a socialist country or government in the Americas. Thus, much of the considerable experience Cuba had built up in the diplomatic sphere in the many years of socialism is rather limited in its applicability today.

This having been said, it is important to note that Cuba has now had a fully professional foreign service for over four decades, and its diplomats are generally regarded as very good indeed. In addition, while suspended from the OAS since the 1960s, Cuba has been active in the Non-Aligned Movement as well as socialist ones. Cubans of course recognize the weakness of all these linkages, even as they try to show that they are not as isolated as some would have us believe.

Against this background, it is important to remember that in the specific area of confidence building, Cuba has had little part to play. While a partner of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact in many fields, its geography and special circumstances ensured that it had no role in either the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks of the early 1970s or the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, later OSCE) talks in Europe. Cuba did not take part in any of the post-Helsinki process in this regard nor has it had any role whatsoever in other serious discussions on security matters between East and West. Even in related matters like peace operations, as we have noted, Cuba's willingness to cooperate in many of them has been stymied by U.S. opposition to its soldiers' appearance in blue berets and such keenness as there was tended to atrophy in recent

years by Havana's view that most peacekeeping is now merely in the service of the United States.³⁸

Cuba has on the other hand been part of the continuing discussions on the Tlatelolco Treaty of 1967, the treaty banning nuclear weapons in Latin America. Even then, its conversion to the idea of limiting its own nuclear options has been recent.³⁹ Before now, it argued that it could not limit its freedom of action in such a way until such time as relations with the United States improved. Even regarding the Ottawa Convention (on landmines) Cuba has held that this "poor man's weapon" could not be abandoned while the United States had as official policy the overthrow of the Cuban state.

Having said this, it is important to remember that confidence building may have been fashionable of late in the context of the European experience, but that the idea is of course an ancient one, not dependent for its acceptance on particular series of definitions found in the present and recent context. Cuban diplomats feel they were part of a major confidence-building arrangement in southern Africa in the context of the Angola and related negotiations. They feel much the same about the Central American peace processes of the 1980s and early 1990s. As professionals, they have no trouble at all understanding CBMs or their utility. Indeed, many this author encountered were as familiar as anyone in the north with the phenomenon, its possibilities, and its limitations. As will be seen, they also see their approach to their future relations with some of their neighbors and to the United States in particular often as potentially set in confidence-building terms. They nonetheless argue that it is the United States that is threatening Cuba and not the reverse, and that therefore the key to conflict resolution in this case can only be found in Washington.

The United States and Confidence Building

The United States has of course been an active member of the international community for well over two centuries even though it had a preference for a kind of isolation for much of the early period of its history. A world power for over a century now, the United States was a major actor in the international relations of North America and the northern Caribbean very early on in its independent life and soon thereafter became one on a wider scale. For long feared in the whole region as an expansionist and voracious neighbor, the United States embarked under President Franklin Roosevelt on a policy of gaining the confidence of what it hoped would in the future be its partners in the Americas through the famous "Good Neighbor Policy." By the

end of World War II, this objective seemed achieved and the perception of the United States was largely favorable although there were some who were never convinced that the policy was anything but a hoax. The United States had over that time become the proponent of moderate reform in the region and a reasonably firm advocate of regional democracy.

Such was the change in perception of the northern giant that it was largely the region's own governments that were to seek a new and close political and even military arrangement of a permanent kind with Washington, something simply unthinkable seven years earlier. At the Chapultepec Conference of 1945, and then at Rio de Janeiro two years later, they set up a military alliance system with permanent commitments on all sides of a classic collective security kind. This was completed by an inter-American "system," based on the OAS, whose political, juridical, and defense implications would simply have been unrecognizable to any Latin American diplomat an even shorter period before.

On the democratic front, however, the cold war was of course to change all this seemingly happy state of affairs and a new wave of military interventions accompanied determined efforts to bring Latin American behavior into line with new U.S. strategic priorities. Reform of any substance was essentially discouraged and all manner of dictatorship supported as long as its anticommunist credentials were in good order.⁴⁰ Thus, the perception on the left, but also in much of the political center where the United States was concerned, became again one of an interventionist and conservative power, willing to brook no opposition to its influence and economic interests in the region. Thus in a sense what can be seen as early U.S. efforts at confidence building in the southern part of the hemisphere proved only too short lived.

On the wider world stage, the United States has had great experience with confidence building, either in earlier forms common to powers historically, or in its current accepted form coming out of the experience of recent cold war decades. The United States was a major mover in the early MBFR talks between the two central cold war alliances. It was then extremely active in the CSCE, talks involving all the European states as well as Canada and the United States. Much of the theoretical and practical thinking and writing on CBMs has been done in U.S. universities and think tanks and in that country's State and Defense Departments. The United States as a result boasts a large number of experts and thinkers on the subject.

Washington conducted what was doubtless a very important and well thought out series of CBMs with the Soviet Union in their bilateral relationship as well. A variety of strategic arms talks, and cooperation

at a number of levels in space, science, culture, and many other fields underscored the desire on both sides to build confidence between the superpowers as the end of the cold war drew closer. In the nuclear era, following the arrival of something like Mutual Assured Destruction on the part of both superpowers, it became increasingly clear that a less confrontational and more cooperative approach to resolving major problems was needed. Traditional U.S. deterrence, for example, had been based on proven nuclear superiority or even a homeland that essentially was a virtually untouchable haven. By the end of the 1970s, except for those who hoped for a workable antimissile shield set up somehow over the United States, there were few who still thought in such terms. If the USSR could subsequently always be in a position to inflict unacceptable damage on the United States, then one would simply have to find a more cooperative way of doing business with Moscow. Confidence building would be part and parcel of learning to trust the USSR and live with it, if not in harmony, at least without paranoia.

Confidence-building measures have thus enjoyed overall a favorable press in the United States as a whole and their advantages are often discussed for conflict situations around the world even though in the period after September 11 U.S. interest in arms control and thus in CBMs has waned and has seemed on occasion to have disappeared altogether. It is perhaps not surprising that this acceptance was even before 2001 not always the case for contexts where U.S. vital interests were seen to be directly concerned and where Washington was accustomed to having little real opposition to its wishes. It must also be said that in the 1990s, even before the September 11 events, such acceptance had been less visible in U.S. foreign policy in general as a result of the end of the Soviet Union and U.S. unipolarity.

The Two Positions Where Confidence Building Is Concerned

In the introduction it was mentioned that neither side of the Cuba-U.S. confrontation is terribly convinced of the value of confidence building for the resolution of their outstanding and multifaceted dispute. Indeed, research on this subject is only for the hardy. The nature of the conflict is of course part of the matter but just as important is probably now the fact that the issue has been there for such an extraordinarily long time. The world is accustomed to these two states locked in a conflict over very lengthy periods of time. But the Cuba-U.S. confrontation has little in the way of deep historical animosity (although distrust on the side of the smaller for the larger),

less of an ethnic or religious basis, and even less still of natural dislike between peoples. Most Cubans admire and like Americans. The feeling tends to be mutual.

Be that as it may, there is between the two countries a more than 45-year struggle over what sometimes seems to boil down simply to who is going to be boss on the island. This is not so much merely bilateral but also wider ranging in the sense that for many observers it is Cuba's example as a country that has distanced itself from the boss, and still survived, which Washington finds utterly unacceptable. This seems to this observer unlikely or at least needful of *nuance*. Ignorance of and even indifference to Cuba have been much more marked elements of U.S. policy, over the last four decades and longer, than have determined efforts to unseat the man who dared challenge the giant. But this deserves more attention than we can give it here and there is doubtless something to the argument that Cuba as a model of how a state can resist U.S. blandishments is not something Washington finds palatable.

The United States appears particularly uninterested in the confidence-building route as a way to find a path forward with Havana. The United States is a complex picture for the analyst where Cuba is concerned and nowhere is this more the case than where issues of mutual trust are concerned. The base point for analysis is that here as in so much else, domestic politics tend to drive the foreign policy agenda. And on the Cuba issue there exists the most complex of domestic political contexts. Here indeed is an "intermestic" issue if ever there was one.⁴¹

Most U.S. citizens show little interest in the subject of Cuba. It is an old issue, confusing to most, and one that is far from central to their lives. Repeated polls have shown to what degree this is the case. However, on the Cuban issue, one faces a phenomenon often called the "single-issue voter." This is where a portion of the population, even a very small section, votes along lines dominated by a single issue of overwhelming importance for them but of only marginal interest to the rest of the electorate. Examples are many. At various times the Israeli issue has produced such behavior in the Hebrew community in a number of countries, while the immigration issue has on occasion had similar effects among Mexican Americans.

In the Cuban case, one sees over a million Americans of Cuban birth or descent, or at least their most visible and vociferous leaders, voting or threatening to vote along lines reflecting *only* their views on what U.S. policy should be toward the island. Whether this is an accurate impression is in many ways neither here nor there. The impression in key political circles is that it is the case. And it must be said that

until very recently the community in question has been dominated by an extreme view of the proper policy to be applied where the Cuban government was concerned. And while there has been some *nuance* added to the debate recently, with some members of the community willing to dare to speak out against such extremism; the overall impression is still one of a large group of voters who will only support politicians willing to take a hard line on what to do about Cuba.⁴² This situation has prevailed for so long in the United States, and especially in electorally important South Florida, that it has taken on some of the attributes of permanence on the political landscape.⁴³

This state of affairs has shown itself perfectly capable of hamstringing even the new president or legislator most disposed to a fresh look at the question of Cuba policy. And in a country and political system as complicated as that in the United States, few indeed are the leaders willing to tackle an issue as thorny as this without great cause. Pressure to take that political leap simply has not existed in a society where neither business nor political groupings of sufficient clout have so far considered a change in policy toward Cuba to be in any real way a priority for them. While this is changing at the present time, with agricultural interests leading the way, and many separate groupings following them in their wake, it has so far had relatively little in the way of impact. Cuba is not a huge potential market although it is doubtless a potentially important one. But the very nature of the Revolution and its philosophy, its determination to not see the United States come back in a way to dominate totally the Cuban state and economy, argues against at least part of the belief that a huge market awaits the United States *automatically* in the "Pearl of the Antilles."

This is complicated by a true resentment at Cuba's opposition to U.S. policy worldwide and in the Americas over the long run, its past links with the USSR, its frequently repressive policies at home, and its ability to successfully resist seemingly overwhelming U.S. pressure over such a long time. Many quite sincere Americans feel that the Cuban government can simply not be trusted to fulfill its obligations under any CBM arrangements. Senior diplomats and even some military officers will insist that their experience with the Cubans is overwhelmingly negative and that CBMs simply have no place where there is no hope at all of being able to have a meaningful level of confidence in a regime like that of Fidel Castro.

Others say that it is unnecessary to build such confidence in any case because the Castro government is on its last legs. And even though these people are perhaps less common 15 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall with Castro still in power, they do still make their views heard. Thus, the pressures for moving toward building confidence

with Cuba are few and far between, whereas those pushing in the opposite direction are ever so visible and obvious, or at least seem only too much so to politicians and many others working in public affairs in the United States. Indeed, even that very visible willingness of U.S. diplomats and serving officers to have a sense of humor on the Cuban issue, so obvious before the events of February 1996, has been noticeable by its absence since then.

The fact that there is little movement on the central issues of the bilateral relationship should thus not overly surprise us even though it must be said that the scene may be more fluid than immediately meets the eye with seemingly contradictory messages coming out of Congress, new groups pushing for re-established relations popping up noisily, some key opponents out of the way, and other trends. Normally this sort of fluidity can be very positive for confidence building as the very process favors those aiming to change perceptions and each concrete step reinforces those in favor and reduces the influence of those who say confidence in the other side is impossible.

For the Cuban government, the question of building confidence is even more straightforward. The United States is not interested in building confidence with Cuba and thus it is impossible, despite all past efforts on Havana's part, to build it with the United States. Washington will settle only for the destruction of the present government, the humiliation of Cuba, and the setting in place of a puppet regime again in the country. And it will use all the considerable means at its disposal to achieve this objective. Under these circumstances, Cuba must act to deter invasion, defend itself if it comes to that, and try to survive in the meantime. Confidence building has been tried many times by Cuba, in this view, and has served little purpose to date. And it must remain a tool of limited utility while there is no political will in Washington to actually improve relations and establish genuine trust. In the end, Cubans tend to argue as well that is for the more powerful to show the first signs of good intent since it is they who pose the threat, not the less strong. And this, in the Cuban view, Washington has simply never been willing even to contemplate.⁴⁴

Cubans point to any number of past efforts to collaborate with Washington, all of them either rejected or only accepted because the United States could not afford to avoid them but even so only taken up *à contrecœur*. The agreements on air piracy, arrived at in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, would have functioned if the United States had not tolerated known aerial terrorists on its territory. Havana has bent over backward on the issue of drug interdiction even though its own drug problem is not in any way as serious as that in the United States. The Cuban government has worked hard in ways

which should be pleasing to Washington on immigration, regional search and rescue, terrorism, inter-American peace, the narcotics trade, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, overflights related to humanitarian missions in Latin America, and on all manner of issues dealing with the smooth functioning of the U.S. base in Guantánamo. And with these arguments Cuban officials insist that they have done their part and found little echo of a similar will to live in peace in Washington.

Instead, they argue that only Cuban surrender is acceptable to the United States and that of course Cuba will never consider that as an acceptable price for peace and good relations. Given the asymmetries of Caribbean life and the lack of a will to build trust in the United States, Cuba will continue to take its responsibilities seriously where its international engagements are concerned, but it cannot avoid the conclusion that massive U.S. opposition to its very existence is the key element in its strategic situation. Such is the view from Havana.

A Word on Sectors

Neither side then sees either an easy road for confidence building or an obvious place for it in the resolution of the conflict between them. Diplomats and officials on both sides, especially in the United States, are somewhat averse even to discussing them, especially with third parties. And as mentioned, there is an underlying feeling that there is no point to such discussions. No doubt this fits well with the accepted view that CBMs can only work best when set in a context of a mutual desire for better relations and the political will to move forward in resolving or at least defusing a given dispute, and thus the longevity of the Cuba-U.S. dispute is understandable in confidence-building theory terms.

If one accepts a transformation view of CBMs, as mentioned before as being put forward by James Macintosh, there is much to be said for this assertion. And the Latin American region is full of recent cases to reinforce it: Peru-Ecuador, Argentina-Chile, Colombia-Venezuela, even intra-Mercosur relations themselves.⁴⁵ It is simply logical that CBMs would work best under these circumstances as they indeed did in Europe as well, when the CSCE process was propelled forward by the changes in the overall political context of the late 1980s. And it is thus logical that where such conditions do not apply, as in the Cuba-U.S. relationship, CBMs do not work best.

It is obviously ideal if the views of a rival or opponent in the whole of a country's political structure can be changed or indeed transformed in a context of converging political wills, interests, and hopes

for the future. CBMs can reinforce those contexts with all manner of specific measures that show how trust can be had in the other side, how that interlocutor does honor agreements, and how mutual advantage can be obtained in areas where mutual distrust previously halted progress.

Governments, however, are complex institutions even in the smallest of states. Institutional interests among elements of governments can be quite different and a variety of organs of the state may give priority to different issues whatever others feel about that assessment. Neither the Cuban government nor that of the United States always speaks with one voice although obviously this is more the case in a liberal democracy such as the United States and a country of such vast size and complexity than it is in a state governed by an authoritarian system such as the Cuban.

The research done for this study would suggest more than a little *nuance* be added to this view of confidence building that, on the whole, is nonetheless accepted by the author. It may still be the case, despite the correctness of this view overall, that *specific organs* of the state may have their views of a rival or opponent changed in important ways, if not completely transformed, by the actions of that other state or some of its organs. And it is possible to imagine that those actions may cause some organs of a given state to see the opponent as more reliable, more trustworthy, less Satanic, than is the case with some other elements of the country's government. The existence of such a sector of a state, with such a changed view of the opponent, may have a significant role in modifying the behavior of its own state with regard to the opponent and thereby reduce tensions and otherwise improve perceptions.

The argument here is that this is possible and even more so in the complicated state structures and politics of modern politics. The suggestion is not that this is automatic or even likely or that it represents anything like a transformation of the views of the whole body of key decision makers in a country. It does suggest that it may mean a modification in the views of a sector of those decision makers and that this modification may have political importance and could, under some circumstances, be exploited to move the conflict resolution agenda forward.

Is There Any Confidence Building Occurring in Cuba-U.S. Relations?

There are many observers who will argue, with reasons such as those mentioned above, that there is in fact no conflict building going on in

the Cuba-U.S. relationship. Indeed, they will assert with some conviction that this is surely obvious since in so many senses the relations are worse than they have ever been at the present time. Thus, they argue that there can hardly have been any confidence building going on since there is less confidence than before.

It is of course difficult to argue with this assessment at the present time if one takes the transformation of elite perceptions between Cuba and the United States as the only thing conflict building is actually about. Despite clear indications from growing sectors of the business, NGO, cultural, and even sports communities in the United States, it cannot be said that elite perceptions in the country are going through anything like a real transformation at this time. Change is occurring but full transformation most certainly is not as yet. The same is surely the case in a Cuba facing still the ferociously negative conditions of life it currently endures and feeling, rightly or wrongly, that this is the fault of the United States.

If, however, one asks if there are actions being undertaken by specific agencies of the two governments in question that may be heightening the willingness of sectors in the other country to change their views on the other, I would assert that then there is something of this sort very definitely going on in the Cuba-U.S. relationship. And if one asks if this modifies the behavior of one or both of these actors in their dealings with the other, then the answer is also affirmative. Some examples of this will be required to demonstrate how this works in the present extremely negative context.

U.S. and Cuban Cooperation on Immigration

As usual when matters of mass immigration are concerned, there is something of the tragic in the whole story of migration from Cuba to the United States. A process that started early on in the revolutionary government's rule, massive emigration from the island has known fits and starts since the early 1960s.⁴⁰ This is not as a result of a lack of potential migrants at any time in the last four decades but rather is largely caused by the migration policies of the two countries. And whereas the two capitals agree on little else, they have made common cause on more than one occasion on the issue of illegal immigration into the United States, and they do so today as well.

It is obviously extremely embarrassing for the Cuban government to have the problem of a significant portion of its population wishing to undertake the hazardous and painful process of abandoning their homeland and moving to another. At the same time, however, immigration from all of this part of the world to the United States is

neither new nor odd. The differences in standards of living between the countries of the Caribbean Basin and the United States have for long caused anything up to a virtual flood of migrants to move northward in search of a better life. And this is hardly true for only Cuba as recent events in Haiti, Central America, and to a great extent the whole of the Basin attest. Indeed, even in relatively prosperous Mexico the movement of people northward is constant and massive.

It is also true that the emigration of Cubans has had positive effects for the government in Havana. The opposition to the revolutionary experiment has generally had the option of simply moving. And indeed, its members and any other Cuban have had since 1966 the right to settle in the United States simply as a result of arriving on that country's shores, a unique situation. This new interpretation of the U.S. Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962, incorporated in the Cuba Adjustment Act of 1966, gave the status of refugee to any Cuban who got to U.S. territory and was doubtless meant to embarrass Castro. And while doubtless it did and does, it is also true that many authoritarian states would be more than pleased with such an easy and constantly available way to decapitate and indeed dismember its opposition. Thus both governments have been willing to "play politics" with the immigrant.

In the intervening years, there have been periods of great migration and periods of absolute quiet where the phenomenon of Cubans' movement toward the United States is concerned. There have been great migrations such as the authorized sea borne movement known as "Mariel" after the port from which it sailed in 1981. And more recently, and even more dramatically there was the "balsero" (raft man) phenomenon of the mid-1990s, the vast individual or small group exodus by boat, tiny raft, or even tire inner tube that captured the headlines of the world for many days.

While in the early 1960s immigration was hardly much of a political issue in the United States, by the 1990s it most certainly had become one. And cold war issues that made Americans welcome Cuban immigrants in the former period had lost virtually all their importance for U.S. citizens by the latter. Even the Mariel "hordes," as they were called by unhappy opponents of the sealift, had been the source of severe criticism of the government authorizing their arrival in 1981. And several such events in the 1990s brought a barrage of complaints. The former welcoming policy was abandoned in the face of the *balsero* invasion's sheer size and the fact that it arrived just after other major migrant movements (especially from neighboring Haiti) aiming at U.S. shores had disturbed domestic peace in that country.

The U.S. government was forced to enter into formal negotiations with the Cuban government in order to find a way out of a domestic crisis over the issue. When the two sides sat down to discuss the matter, Havana scored a major diplomatic victory by getting further U.S. de facto recognition of itself as the effective government in Cuba, something it had been hoping to achieve for some time. The resulting document, while not formally termed a treaty because of the obvious message that would send, was included in the 1994 volume of *Consolidated Treaties and Agreements* of the United States. Signed on September 9, 1994, it stated that "The United States and the Republic of Cuba are committed to directing Cuban migration into safe, legal and orderly channels," establishing thereby that the two countries were collaborating on a mutual problem in a way that would benefit both.

The United States would ease its restrictions on the numbers of immigrant visas for Cuban nationals, and "authorize and facilitate additional lawful migration to the United States from Cuba." The figure set for legal immigration was to be at 20,000 per year, not including those who would come as immediate relatives of U.S. citizens. The increases in the number of such visas granted meant that it was also agreed that "both parties would work together to facilitate the procedures necessary to implement this measure," and this would imply a growth in the two countries' interests sections.

The two countries also agreed to a procedure for the voluntary return of Cuban nationals that would occur through future cooperation between their two diplomatic staffs, and pledged their cooperation "to prevent the transport of persons to the United States illegally." They also accepted their "common interest in preventing unsafe departures from Cuba," while the United States "discontinued its practice of granting parole to all Cuban migrants who reach U.S. territory in irregular ways."⁴⁷ Lastly they agreed to meet later on to review the implementation of the communiqué.

Cuba of course trumpeted its diplomatic victory but for our purposes that is beside the point. The important matters here are that first, both countries did agree to deal with a crisis situation jointly and both acknowledged the need for the other's collaboration in order to bring the crisis under control. And second, it must be said that the cooperation occurred in an issue area that, logically or not, was beginning to be treated as a matter of state security. These gains were achieved in the short run. And it is clear from discussions with both Cuban and U.S. officials that the implementation of this accord has proceeded smoothly since and that both sides feel they have to all intents and purposes the cooperation of the other in this sad business.

There are still high-level bilateral meetings on the subject of immigration and implementation of the Joint Communiqué twice a year. In addition, there are more frequent meetings at lower levels. Equally important for building confidence, either side can call for a meeting if it deems it worthwhile given evolving events or issues that come up. The armed forces on occasion, and the coast guards on a virtually daily basis, work together with what appears to be no friction and usually good results. Handovers of affected persons occur without incident and there is considerable transfer of useful information between the two partners as well.

It is especially important to note that much of the responsibility for Cuban, and some other, illegal immigration has come to some extent in recent years to be the responsibility of the Department of Defense (DoD). That U.S. government agency helps in patrolling borders and sea approaches through which illegal immigrants come. And the nature of the U.S.-Cuban relationship ensures that this is especially true in the case of immigration from that country. Thus, Cuban and U.S. ships and aircraft, of a variety of security services, but that include directly or indirectly the military on occasion, often work together. In general the mutual respect among these military and other forces is significant and has developed well over time.

The search and rescue requirements of this role for both armed forces is also an area for the growth of mutual confidence. This issue loomed large in the negotiations and is of course a major one in the circumstances of illegal migrants moving across the dangerous Florida Straits.

This is one of the few areas where Cubans are fully prepared to say that the cooperation in place in the immigration field can be viewed as a CBM. Bilateral in nature, it assures the Cubans that the immigration issue will not be used as a stick with which the United States will beat them, and the United States is assured that the immigration problem will be dealt with both at source and in a bilateral way en route to destination. While U.S. officials are not inclined at all to use CBM language about this issue, it is clear that they often realize very well that the cooperation arranged at a bilateral level does raise confidence in the Cuban government's good intentions and its willingness to live up to its agreements in this vital area.

The International Trade in Illegal Narcotics

For some time, at least since the mid-1980s, the United States had considered the international illegal drug menace to be its number one security threat. And while the events of September 11, 2001 clearly

changed this, the issue is still taken seriously and still left as a largely security matter.⁴⁸ The bulk of this “threat” to the United States originates in Latin America (mostly in Mexico, Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru) in the form of heroin, cocaine, and marijuana production. And most of this travels north to the United States, whereas lesser amounts move to Canada and Europe and increasingly to other parts of the world. For purposes of rough analysis only, countries have then been broken down into producers, consumers, and countries of transit, although of course the exactness of these designations is open to more than just quibbling given the consumption patterns today in all countries including most of those in Latin America.

It has proven difficult to attack the problem at source because of distance, lack of full cooperation from, and capacity of, local governments, and the overall vastness of the task. To address it in any serious way at the stage of consumption would imply disturbing middle-class U.S. citizens, and this would doubtless be paid for at election time by politicians in favor of such stern measures at home. Thus considerable emphasis has been placed on the transit phases including the final arrival in sea and airports, and at the land borders, of the United States itself.

Cuba finds itself in the middle of the battle lines in this sense. As we see in chapter 2, its seven hundred miles of east to west land mass stretch almost the entire way across the maritime spaces between Mexico and Haiti and thus can either assist in blocking or alternately facilitating the work of narcotics traffickers attempting to reach the U.S. market. The interest of the *narcos* in Cuba is thus immense. And therefore the interest in U.S. drug fighting organizations in Cuba, and especially that of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), is an obvious one.

Cuba is well aware of the strategic minefield that the drug trade, and the island's great potential for use by drug traffickers, represents. Havana does not state that drugs are for it a security issue but it is obvious that in the context of the dispute with the United States, only a very daring, or foolish government would risk running afoul of Washington on this issue at this time.⁴⁹ Thus for strategic reasons as well as its own views on the subject, Cuba has been active in the international antidrug trade field for well over a decade and a half. Even this is understating the case. The Revolutionary “government” was keen on eradicating drug production and traffic before it even left the Sierra Maestra.⁵⁰ Fidel made the zones of rebel control in the mountains as drug-free as possible. And once in government he moved quickly to ensure that the tolerance of drugs so prevalent in the Batista government was replaced by a serious antidrugs campaign in the whole of the island.

Meyer Lansky's arrival in 1938, and then that of almost countless other Mafiosi including Lucky Luciano, many closely linked to the drugs trade in the United States and especially to heroin, made Cuba a significant transit and distribution point for this activity not to mention a place where considerable marijuana was grown. Cuban marijuana, especially that from the Isla de Pinos, was known for its good quality.⁵¹ By the late 1950s Batista's police, and according to some sources the president himself, were basically in the pocket of these *narcos* and the rest of the mafioso elements with the military, especially the air force, co-opted.⁵² The Colombian *narco* connection grew apace at this early stage and when linked with the mafia connection, made Cuba a lynchpin of the trade.

With the arrival of the Revolution all this changed. The Rebel Army, already accustomed to dealing harshly with those involved in the business farther east, moved quickly once in power in Havana. Key areas of the city such as Habana Vieja, Centro Habana, Cerro, and Marianao found a different sort of security service checking out the drugs scene. A large number of raids followed completely disarticulating the distribution arrangements in the city.

Agents and informers were recruited in large numbers and the police antidrugs section expanded immensely. The, at first, poorly trained, but keen new security personnel were amazed to find in the police archives not a single file on any drug traffickers despite the plethora of such types in the capital.⁵³ The crackdown on casinos and illegal nightlife made Fidel serious and long-term enemies in the drugs world. And the MINSAP (*Ministerio de Salud Pública* or Health Ministry) went to work on domestic consumers with a will. The campaign was a success and the problem, although never eradicated entirely, was done away with for the time being.

In 1989, a great shock to the Cuban political system occurred related to the international illegal drugs trade. Cuba executed several high-ranking officers, one of them a "Hero of the Revolution," from the Interior Ministry and the Armed Forces after they had been found guilty of cooperation in drug trafficking. Their activities were, in the government's view, not only illegal and damaging to Cuba's prestige, but also extremely troubling for its national security given the state of relations with the United States.⁵⁴ And this was merely one of a number of efforts by the government to prove it was serious on drugs and understood U.S. preoccupations on the subject. Havana could not and cannot afford accusations about its involvement in the drugs trade to gain credibility now that the United States had declared the issue its number one security problem, the cold war was over, and United States power was more available for smaller fish than the Russians.⁵⁵

Cuba is obviously trying very hard to please Washington on this score to give no shred of an excuse for an aggressive policy on the part of the United States based on any supposed Cuban soft position on drugs. Cubans often reflect on the end of the Noriega regime in Panama in 1989 as a result, at least in some considerable part, of its narcotics links. They point out that between 1994 and the beginning of 1998, more than 31 tons of drugs, virtually all bound for the United States, has been seized by Cuban security forces. They stress that some 188 foreigners and many more Cubans were arrested over this same period while attempting to use Cuba as a point of transit. And while it is almost certainly an exaggeration when Cubans claim that over 90 percent of drugs landing on their coasts are seized, the Cuban record is by international and especially Latin American standards very good indeed.⁵⁶

There is little doubt that this effort is much appreciated in key circles in Washington and especially in the DEA itself. Discussions with DEA officials have shown this to the present author and it is clear that many such persons feel that Cuba is making a much greater effort than are many other countries that enjoy U.S. favor. Respect for the professionalism and relative honesty of Cuban security forces dealing with drugs is often immensely higher in these circles than that with regard to the same forces in Mexico, Central America, and parts of the Caribbean and Andean regions.

Can this be considered a CBM? It is an open secret that Cuba has been passing information on through third parties to interested U.S. agencies when it has intelligence of value to that country in the antidrug struggle. And in recent years, despite the failure of informal talks at the end of the 1990s to provide a formal basis for bilateral cooperation such as that on immigration, that exchange of information on drugs has become more direct. It should be noted that even in 1978 and 1979 there had been direct talks on antidrug trade cooperation between the U.S. Coast Guard and the *Tropas Guarda Fronteras* of the MININT. And although they did not reach any formal agreement a good deal of cooperation took place informally up until 1982 when the Reagan government put a stop to it.⁵⁷ The United States reciprocates, officially only on a "case-by-case" basis, but in fact much more often than that basis would allow, and this is especially true since the failure of the 1999 bilateral conversations on antidrug cooperation. And there have been some huge "hauls" resulting from such cooperation, some so large that reluctant U.S. government officials have had to admit that Cuba deserved thanks for its cooperation.

The DEA's perception of Cuba is doubtless colored by this experience and for our purposes it is important to remember that the agency

is a major player in much decision making in Washington, especially on Caribbean and wider Latin American issues. It should perhaps not surprise us then that the DEA has rather a reputation for not being very "ideological" on Cuba as long as it plays the game and cooperates against drugs. And at least from Havana's perspective, such cooperation should properly be seen as a CBM even if it is not considered publicly in Washington.

Defense

It is even less known that in fact the two nations' defense forces are engaged in some other, if still very limited, cooperation as well. As has been shown, this is true in the illegal immigration field as well as that touching drugs. And given the growing U.S. concerns in these areas, as well as steadily rising military involvement in dealing with them, the defense element of the Cuba-U.S. "relationship" is an obvious one. The sort of defense collaboration discussed in this section, however, is of a more traditional kind. It involves general defense issues, the arrangements for the effective use of the U.S. base at Guantánamo, as well as matters related to support for missions related to natural disasters.

The Guantánamo base is, for Cuba, one of the most humiliating and even dangerous elements of the residue of the "incomplete" sovereignty the country knew before the 1959 Revolution. The base arrangement was imposed on Cuba as part of the deal whereby U.S. occupation forces finally left the bulk of the island and independence became at least formally a fact in 1902. The agreement establishing its presence can, of course, only be ended with the agreement of both parties and, despite repeated Cuban attempts to convince the United States to abandon the base, Washington has been unwilling to do so.⁵⁸

The United States pays a miniscule rent for the base each year but as a matter of pride, all these checks have been retained and not cashed since the Revolution. Despite the special features of the impact of the base on other traffic in Guantánamo Bay, the United States is not obliged in the 1903 accord on the installation to provide details of ship movements into or out of the territory. And it has been until recently U.S. practice not to provide such information. Indeed, it is Cuban shipping that is obliged to move through special channels in order to enter and exit the bay, and to advise U.S. authorities of their intentions. And it is only through Cuban military intelligence that national authorities have in the past had some idea of likely U.S. movements. There are some reports that this has changed somewhat of late and that the United States is now more cooperative, but it has been impossible to confirm this. If it were to prove true, it would be

important for the argument on bilateral confidence building being made here.

Despite these reasons for rancor, relations here between the military forces of the two countries are really surprisingly good. The FAR face directly those of the United States in only one part of the world, and that is along the border between the base and the rest of the island's territory. At some places the two sides are separated by slightly less than 100 m of terrain. Given the very poor relations between the two nations, and the unpleasant and still not all that distant experience of direct confrontation in Grenada, it might be expected that some incidents would occasionally occur and some have indeed taken place. Both sides have in the past spoken of the other's "provocations." And there is little doubt that such incidents could prove dangerous given the state of overall relations.

In this sense there has been a clear interest on both sides to avoid incidents and solve problems before they became serious. Interviews with officers of both forces show clearly that each understands the need for such avoidance and that each appreciates the efforts of the other to ensure that no incidents occur, or if they do, that they remain in hand. There is direct communication by computer between the staffs of the two commanders on the ground and this system is used on a continuing basis. Meetings can be arranged between staffs at essentially any time on an "as needed" basis. These arrangements are reported by both sides to be functioning without difficulty.

On the more negative side, search and rescue arrangements between the two sides, effective in the rest of the waters and air space around the island, specifically exclude Guantánamo. This is unfortunate as there is room for such cooperation in this zone, as was shown in dramatic fashion during the Haitian boat people crisis in the 1990s, and in the Cuban dimension of that crisis arising from the decision to hold many of these migrants at the base.

More recently, Fidel moved quickly not only to accept the use of the base for the handling of Taliban and other prisoners after the invasion of Afghanistan began in earnest, but also to reassure the United States that Cuba would cooperate fully if there were escape attempts or other complications for the United States arising from the situation. Indeed, Cuba offered help if the base needed assistance from the island government now that there was so much more activity of a difficult and unusual kind occurring on the installation's territory. It can of course be argued that the United States needs no such permission from Cuba in order to use the base as it pleases, and that it did not appreciate Cuban vocal criticism of its role in Afghanistan or the thrust of its antiterrorist policies, or its oft-voiced slogan of "No to

Terrorism. No to War.” This is almost certainly true but it is equally true that Cuba went out of its way to ensure that the United States understood that cooperation would be forthcoming, a confidence building measure in itself if taken as such and under almost any other circumstances.⁵⁹

This is especially telling in the sense that while Cuba denounced the terrorist attacks, offered the United States assistance, and moved quickly to ensure its own territory, seas, and airspace were even more secure against any potential efforts aiming at striking at the northern superpower; Havana distanced itself from “war.” Like Canada and many European countries, Cuba was ill at ease with the idea of calling the campaign against terrorism a “war” because of its implications in the area of international law. In addition, Fidel warned that a major war, especially from the air and with often uncertain targets, could create many more future terrorists even if it reduced somewhat the numbers of those currently using such methods. “Contra el terrorismo y contra la guerra”⁶⁰ became the key expression of Cuba’s attitude to September 11 and its aftermath. Over time the second point appeared to become more important as Cuba felt strongly that the United States was using the war on terrorism as a means to reinforce a hegemonic position. Cuba’s minister of foreign affairs, Felipe Pérez Roque, in a statement at the UN General Assembly’s 57th session on September 14, 2002, only three days after the first anniversary of the massive terrorist attack on the United States, said

On a day like today, I would like to repeat the remarks stated by Cuba at the last General Assembly: “Only under the leadership of the United Nations will we be able to defeat terrorism. Cooperation and not war is the way. The coordination of actions and not imposition is the method . . . Cuba reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations. Cuba reiterates that it will never allow its territory to be used for terrorist attacks against the people of the United States or any other country.”⁶¹

Be that as it may there was apparently never any serious consideration of turning back and withdrawing the offer of assistance. And Cuba has continued to be active in international forums working on how best to confront the terrorist challenge and has signed all the major international agreements dealing with the matter. But the United States is not impressed. It is especially uninterested on the politically sensitive point of bilateral cooperation even when some voices in Washington recommend more collaboration with a state that is so clearly antiterrorist and anxious to prove it.⁶²

It is a curious thing to think that cooperation occurs so well at what could be argued is the single most visible negative element of the whole Cuba-U.S. relationship. Because if the "blockade" is the most destructive blow Cuba receives from the United States, the base is a constant reminder of Cuba's "natural" position of dependency. Yet the realities of the situation is that the day-to-day functioning of the base and its contact with its Cuban neighborhood is virtually without problems today, even with the evident differences over the war on terrorism.⁶³

Another positive side of the bilateral military relationship in the Guantánamo area has been in the area of flight safety. The runway approaches to the base have been increasingly difficult for pilots to use as more modern and demanding aircraft have been using the facility. In 1994, the United States asked Cuba for a changed routing arrangement for aircraft using the airfield. Only a short time afterward was Cuban official permission for the changes granted even though they implied an increase in the Cuban airspace required by U.S. aircraft to approach the base. Later the United States asked for even further changes and these also were granted without fuss. Here again, the two armed forces appeared to be able to cooperate relatively easily on practical military matters despite the poor overall relations between their countries.

In addition on the defense side, there is the question of overflights of Cuba by U.S. aircraft. The United States has for many years been involved in intelligence gathering near and over Cuba. These overflights increased in the early 1990s in the political context described above. Havana has of course protested these continuing violations of its sovereignty and security. In more recent years, however, the growth of a U.S. interest in natural disaster relief, and that activity coming as a Department of Defense responsibility, has meant that the United States has wanted to fly more acceptable missions over Cuba. These aim at more quickly and efficaciously reaching stricken destinations in the rest of the region. Here again, the value of Cuba's strategic position athwart vital lines of communication to and from the United States is obvious.

Thus Washington has repeatedly requested Cuban permission for overflights moving in the direction of areas hit by natural disasters and Havana has consistently granted these. Equally important, it has given permission in time for effective assistance to reach the affected zones. Here again, the bilateral cooperation between defense forces on practical matters of joint concern has been worthy of note.

Despite accusations in many circles, including some military ones, cooperation does take place. And wilder accusations seem to get only

so far in terms of affecting government. For example, Admiral Tom Wilson, head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said in early 2001 that Fidel could begin “an information warfare or computer network attack” with potential for doing damage to the military forces of the United States.⁶⁴ To a question about a potential Cuban cyber attack against the United States put to him at the Senate Intelligence Committee meeting by Senator Ron Wyden in February 2001, Admiral Wilson said that “There’s certainly the potential for them to employ those kind of tactics against our modern and superior military.”⁶⁵ These ideas have not had much impact on policy of late and the defense cooperation mentioned does in fact take place.

What does all this defense cooperation mean in practical terms? In the context of confidence building, it means, and has in fact at times truly meant, that the Department of Defense has had a much less strident position on questions affecting Cuba and its relations with the United States than have some other agencies. It also means that MINFAR is often less willing to believe extremist versions of events, which are on occasion as likely to surface in Havana as they are in Miami. The Cuban military are generally content with their bilateral relationship with the Pentagon where it touches practical matters of joint interest, despite their obvious job of deterring the United States from an invasion of the island and even trying to defeat it if it comes. Indeed, my impression is that they clearly see the link between this deterrence of attack and the need to be cooperative.

Other Areas of Confidence Building

There is of course a much wider range of cooperative efforts that could be considered confidence building. And there are a whole series of what might be called “Track II” efforts, some of them becoming possible because of changes in U.S. policy announced in January 1999.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, when asked for the reasons for these changes, officials in Washington suggested that the new changes were merely a more efficient means of bringing about the overthrow of the Castro government. Needless to say, this has meant that Track II efforts have had a very bad odor in Havana as of the time of writing. Even worse, the effects of September 11 have been essentially to allow hardliners in the United States to hamstring the progress being made before that tragic day.

Efforts already undertaken have, however, had some effect, and many of these prosper. Academic exchanges continue although the new National Security Law in Cuba may limit research within the country further still over the next while. Cultural and sporting events

have been organized a bit more than in the past although the success they have had in confidence-building terms is limited, especially now that Track II is a "dirty word." But so far it is not at all certain how the new National Security Law will actually affect Cubans working with foreigners. Certainly the trials of dissidents in 2003 have made everything more difficult in this regard.

More effective appear to have been visits by U.S. Congressmen and retired military officers and senior security officials to Cuba. And of course visits by members of important business circles have been somewhat helpful as well. Indeed, even the visits by heads of state and government of countries close to the United States seem to have had at least some impact on the likelihood of progress with the relationship and in building confidence within it. The week-long visit of the pope in January 1998 was a breakthrough in this sense and while its public image impact was lessened by the presidential crisis caused by the sex scandals in the White House, it became more difficult in its aftermath for extremists to always emphasize the worst. Visits by Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada later in 1998 and that of King Juan Carlos of Spain in 1999 showed that close allies of the United States have found room for a more positive relationship with the island republic and have found it possible to have confidence in the word of its government, even if both have reservations about its overall record.⁶⁷

Military officers have probably been the most commented upon, other than heads of state and government, of these visitors. The U.S. military enjoys great prestige among the public in its own country. The Americans admire their armed forces and feel close to them. Retired U.S. officers of general rank are accorded an elevated status, especially among their still-serving comrades, not usually enjoyed by their counterparts in other countries. Senior retired officer visits to Cuba were conducted with dignity and the impression taken away was much more favorable than might have been expected, at least by extremist opinion in the United States. In Cuba as well, the impression left by their visits was a positive one little linked with the supposed Satanic influences dominating the other side of the Florida Strait, and especially its Pentagon.

The weather is another area of continuing cooperation that affects the security forces. Hurricanes and other bad weather heading for the United States, and especially for the Gulf Coast, often approach Cuba first. The Cubans are improving their systems of early warning and their ability to follow such phenomena. Here cooperation is important but again informal. The United States much prefers multi-lateral cooperation in this area that gives access to shared information

without insisting that it cooperate with Cuba directly and openly.⁶⁸ But cooperate it does, and while hurricanes have been the main area of collaboration so far there is no reason why this could not be extended to other areas of the environment as it has been with other neighbors of both countries and as recommended in a recent study.⁶⁹

The Results

The results of the limited confidence building achieved in the Cuba–U.S. relationship may be modest but they are real and reflect important changes in the perception of at least some key members of the decision-making elite in the two capitals where the opponent is concerned. Indeed, while here one cannot speak of a breakthrough situation, there is nonetheless significant progress made in sectors of both elites. Some of this is fairly far removed from confidence building in its normal sense although much of what has been done can be considered distinctly within the rubric of what has come to be called “Track II,” informal group contacts that attempt to create an environment of cooperation, trust, and mutual recognition that can help immensely in making formal confidence building work.

Religious groups are active in both countries with all manner of contacts. The churches of Cuba, Protestant as well as Catholic, have never been entirely cut off from the outside world, even at times when Fidel was at his least trusting where such bodies were concerned. And in recent years, especially since the lead-up to the Papal Visit, there has been an explosion in the level and variety of connections. The churches of the United States have led in this although they are hardly out of line with activities from Canadian, European, and Latin American ecclesiastical bodies. The actual visit of the Pope in 1998 gave of course a further boost to these linkages.

Educational programs of all kinds also link the United States and Cuba. Many American universities and colleges include language, history, cultural, politics, economics, sociology, and other programs that include time for the students to spend on the island, and thousands such students have been coming each year. Many professors attend conferences on the island, do research on Cuba, take sabbaticals there, and bring groups of students to learn more about it. In addition many Cuban academics did most of the above in the United States. Education is a key area of connection between the two countries and was growing quickly until the events of 2003. It is too early to say what the effect of the crisis will be on educational linkages although it seems certain that there will be at least some curtailing of them.

Sports organizations have also been active although this sphere has known many ups and downs. Extremists on both sides have been wary of any too profound cooperation in this important and socially influential realm. Baseball in particular offers prospects here but its very popularity in both countries, as well as the long-standing links between the sporting communities in the two, ensures a high profile for the sport and thus ensures that the lobbies against too much activity in this sport remain active.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, there have been connections at a number of levels in baseball, basketball, and quite a number of other sports.

Cultural events have been even more problematic. Since any dealings with Cuba that involve giving funds to an organization of the Cuban state are illegal for U.S. citizens, and given that cultural events usually have some pecuniary element, if only to cover costs; there has been less activity here than might at first be expected. But culture and sport in Cuba, the latter especially, are after all closely connected with the state at a number of levels.

Cuban Americans often follow the very vibrant culture on the island with interest, and of course many Cuban artists and groups do tour abroad. In addition, and especially in recent years a very large number of U.S. choirs, bands, singers, painters, authors, poets, and many other artists have visited the length and breadth of the island. But the degree to which this has had a positive effect on mutual perceptions is debatable. What is less debatable is that such an exchange cannot have failed to have some impact on re-establishing some at least of the many cultural links between the two countries wrecked in the tumultuous days of 1959 and the early 1960s.

The nature of the dispute between the two countries is part of the difficulty with all these by now almost traditional Track II possibilities. The bulk of serious decision makers in the United States know that the Cuban people do not constitute a threat to the superpower next door, except possibly as a source of illegal and unwanted immigration. But the government officially believes that the regime is itself subversive and untrustworthy and none to date has been able to accept the domestic political risks involved in changing this stance. Hence, there are obvious obstacles to cooperation in all these fields from Washington's perspectives.

The Cuban government does not believe that the people of the United States are inherently aggressive but feels that all cooperation of a Track II kind will in one form or another be used to subvert it. Since the Helms-Burton legislation specifically mentions this means as a way of doing just that, Havana is perhaps somewhat justified in keeping its guard up. This is not the ideal stuff of which Track II progress is made

and of course this situation has worsened with the shocking 2003 dissident trials, and the obvious use of such contacts by Mr. James Cason, the head of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, for subversive purposes.⁷¹

This is an important point. In no way is one trying to belittle the real or potential value of Track II initiatives to assist in the creation of a change in elite perceptions in both countries where the other is concerned. However, in the special context of Cuba–U.S. relations, where one country openly states its intention to use such efforts, rightly or wrongly, in order to subvert the other, their utility must be open to some doubt. The perception of elites directly threatened by the very changes that Track II intends to put into place is unlikely to change favorably as a result of them.

This is not, however, the last word on the issue. It is necessary to look at the area of the institutions of the state as the one field where such changes in elite perceptions may prove much more likely to be seen. It may also well be in that sphere where they may be not only more feasible, but also potentially more effective in moving along the confidence-building process more widely.

Defense Ministries

It is now abundantly clear that the two defense ministries of the countries in question have views on the subject of their opponent that differ to an important degree from the official line provided by their governments and do so in marked ways. And it is in this extremely important area of the two national elites that the main success story in confidence building between the two may be found. Also here can be discovered some useful lessons pointing to the need for a closer look at the *sectoral* phenomenon in the confidence-building debate not only in Cuba but also more generally.

Despite official positions that suggest there is no point in dealing on a normal basis with the other side, given its recklessness, perfidy, and general inability to behave properly; the two defense ministries in question have built up a quite limited but satisfactory relationship that points in just the opposite direction. While official Cuba states forcefully that the United States is pushing for the destruction of the Revolution just as soon as that objective can be achieved and by whatever means needed including military pressure, it is obvious that MINFAR believes that in practical and day-to-day terms there is a great deal of *nuance* required here.

On the other side of the Strait, while the official U.S. position is that Cuba is only waiting to embark on subversion, including through

armed force, and even perhaps terrorism, at the first opportunity, and that Havana still seeks the overthrow of legitimate governments almost everywhere; the Pentagon does not share that view.⁷² Instead, it finds the Castro government an unfortunate hangover from the cold war but not in any way a serious threat to the United States and its allies. And while it has obviously at least officially gone along with keeping Cuba on the list of dangerous states where terrorism is concerned, such a stance completely contradicts the Pentagon's long-held position on the sort of problems the island republic still poses.

Be that as it may, before September 2001, the official DoD response to the Graham Amendment had been the most forceful and impressive confirmation of an important change in Pentagon perceptions taking place since the 1980s. It is important to keep in mind when discussing that initiative and the report that it generated, that during most of the cold war the DoD did feel that a Cuba allied to and armed by the Soviet Union, and with offensive tasks near the United States, could be a significant security problem in the case of general war. Even then, however, it often felt the idea of a serious Cuban threat *per se* to be easily exaggerated.⁷³ And in the years of the winding down of the cold war, the Pentagon moved steadily to reduce its perception of Cuba as much of a threat at all.

At the same time, the evolution of the concept of security itself was to play a role here. With the end of the cold war, and the reassertion of other priorities in U.S. foreign and defense policy, that concept was steadily broadened to include more and more threats to the values of the United States and not just its interests. The defense of democracy, the "war" on drugs, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, natural disaster relief, illegal immigration, international organized crime, and a host of other "soft" security issues came to impinge on more traditional areas of defense interest.⁷⁴ And while there was, as could be expected, considerable reluctance on the part of many specialists to broaden the concept of security in this way, the public's determination to do so ensured that the DoD, like other defense ministries in many other parts of the world, followed suit.

In this context, two major fields took on greater importance of quite a particular kind for the Pentagon. Each has been referred to above. They are the struggle against the illegal international narcotics trade and the growing phenomenon of illegal immigration. Neither of these in U.S. traditional terms would have had much to do with defense. Before the 1970s, the armed forces of the United States had never considered a role of any substance in either of these fields although there were vague border control issues from time to time with some connection with them. Even with President Nixon's

beefing up of the national effort against narcotics at this time, the military were generally held at more than arm's length from the endeavor.

The *Uti Comitatis* provisions of the U.S. system where the military are concerned meant that the utility of the armed forces within the United States where drugs were concerned could be easily exaggerated. Forbidden in any case to make arrests they were also excluded from virtually any direct role. And attempts to nuance and even avoid these restrictions through the use of the reserve forces or the National Guard had proven interesting but not impressive in terms of results.⁷⁵ The mid- to late-1980s, however, changed all that. Presidents Reagan and then Bush steadily increased the role of the U.S. military in the fight against drugs and by 1987, the Pentagon was active in many areas of the effort and was a lead agency in at least one, that of intelligence gathering. The role expanded quite steadily especially in its international elements, and budget allocations for it as well.

The situation for illegal immigration was similar if not quite so dramatic. Here the growth of the role has not caught the U.S. public's attention in the way military assistance in the drug war has done. Yet as was seen in both the Haitian and Cuban "boat people" phenomena, not to mention the evolution of the Mexico-U.S. border problem, the DoD has been given either a lead or *the* lead on this matter at moments of considerable difficulty and hence public interest.

Thus, the Pentagon has become involved increasingly in two areas where the Cuban connection is an important one and where the Cuban government wishes to be cooperative with Washington and to be seen so to be. And as has been shown above, the cooperation shown has been really quite good and effective from the Pentagon's perspective in both areas of its new responsibility. Cuba has dealt firmly with the migration issue and in ways at least eventually approached and designed jointly with the United States. And while the drugs issue is still a bit gray here, it is nonetheless an area of obvious joint work and cooperation, even if of a more indirect kind.

At least from the Cuban side this is seen as something of a confidence-building exercise, even if Washington cannot formally say any such thing is taking place and Cuba is at times reluctant to see it in those terms either. Where political will in both capitals is forthcoming, it became obvious how much progress could be made in these two fields. And while some Pentagon officials have gone so far as to suggest military-to-military connections between the two countries to overcome residual mistrust, and further mutual interests, much less daring official documents have long declared that Cuba was no longer a threat to the United States or its vital interests.

The Graham Amendment must be seen in this context. In the light of the impending papal visit to Cuba, repeated trips there by heads of government, senior ministers, and military officers and officials of close allies, and a general relaxing of the public mood on Cuba in the United States; a number of Congressmen, led by Senator Bob Graham of Florida, tagged on an amendment to an appropriations bill in late 1997 requiring the Pentagon to report formally on whether Cuba was still a military threat to the United States. They asked for specific responses on Cuba's nuclear, biological, and chemical activities, the capabilities, especially offensive, of its military forces, current and potential subversive activities, and the like. They remained concerned on the subject of Castro's alleged links to international narcotrafficking and terrorism as well. In addition, the DoD was asked if the regime itself was not a cause for concern for U.S. interests as a whole, and its security interests in particular.

In March 1998, the report's findings were leaked to the press and caused uproar in the more conservative elements of the Cuban American exile community. Miami Republican Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen led the attack making the sensational charge that the U.S. military were serving President Clinton's personal agenda of normalizing relations with Castro rather than doing their job of proper strategic analysis. She went so far as to say: "These Pentagon types are very politicized. They get their instructions very directly from the White House." This was denied by many sources among which were retired U.S. Marine General John Sheehan, who had just returned from a week-long tour of Cuba alongside Raúl Castro and dining with Fidel, as well as by President Bush's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Alberto R. Coll, who said with impatience, "Anybody who admits there's a problem with existing policy is branded a pro-Castro apologist."⁷⁶

Clearly a rift was growing between officials of the Defense Department and the hard-line Cuban American members of the Congress and their allies. But a nervous Defense Secretary William Cohen, concerned over the electoral implications of the analysis, ordered a "bottom-up" review of the report's findings to assuage critics and work went on, or rather in some senses began again. In April 1998, the final review was completed by the Defense Intelligence Agency of the DoD and sent to Cohen before release. It still came, even in its revised format, firmly to the conclusion that Cuba was "no longer a threat" to the United States. Cuba's nuclear program was not considered to be posing any challenges to the United States in any foreseeable future. And although Cuba no doubt had capabilities in the areas of some sort of future programs of biological and chemical warfare if those were needed at some time, there was absolutely no

evidence to suggest there was any activity, or even any interest, in such developments for military purposes. Other senior officers commented on the report and on Cuba's threat potential. The commander of U.S. Southern Command, General Charles Wilhelm, who had had a hand in preparing the report, said that the FAR "has no capability whatsoever to project itself beyond the borders of Cuba."⁷⁷ Asked about a Cuban biological and chemical threat to the United States, General Wilhelm replied, "The indications that we have received are that they do have the capability to produce those kinds of substances but that they have not weaponized them. . . . Any nation with a pharmaceutical industry, and Cuba certainly has that, has the capability to produce biological agents." He insisted that there would be very little incentive at all for Cuba to provoke the United States by producing such weapons.⁷⁸

The Cuban armed forces, even though impressive in many ways in terms of deterrence and defense capabilities, were no longer in a position to conduct serious offensive operations beyond the shores of the island. Indeed, as seen, in general the effects of the ending of the Soviet connection had dealt a major blow to the FAR and their general capabilities were no longer in any sense what they once had been. Grave deficiencies with advanced and specialist training, spare parts, aging, and poorly maintained equipment, ammunition for training and operations, fuel supplies, and many others had reduced considerably both the defensive and offensive capabilities of the Cuban armed forces, especially their offensive potential. Emphasis was being given on the island to retaining to the maximum the defensive core of combat troops that represent the bedrock of the deterrence and defense posture of the country. But a decline in larger general forces was obvious, especially given the need to deploy military manpower, and military organizational skills and leaders, to the tourism and agricultural sectors as well as to other vital economic endeavors.

The situation for subversion had also changed dramatically. There was now a very different Latin America and international community in which Havana had to act. And there were very few allies for it if Cuba chose such activities. While the regime had not changed its view of the world and its ills, practical matters left it little choice but to limit or eliminate altogether what were seen as its subversive activities that were in any case no longer seriously dangerous. In addition, of course, Fidel had by then been long advising caution and negotiations to leftist movements involved in fighting governments close to areas of U.S. strategic interests.

It should be noted, however, that Cohen did not feel strongly enough on the subject to go the whole way in backing his department's

assessment. He placated the Cuban American extremists by accompanying the report's final release by saying,

While the assessment notes that the direct conventional threat by the Cuban military has decreased, I remain concerned about the use of Cuba as a base for intelligence activities directed against the United States, the potential threat that Cuba may pose to neighboring islands, Castro's continued dictatorship that represses the Cuban People's desire for political and economic freedom, and the potential instability that could accompany the end of his regime.⁷⁹

His analysts would certainly have agreed with him on the last point. It was how to address it that continued to divide them. In that context, and perhaps most importantly, the report accepted at least part of the argument put up by moderate opinion in many circles in the United States that the most important threat that Cuba poses to the United States would arise if there were to be too quick and uncontrolled a change of government in the country. Many observers have suggested that the political, economic, and social context of Cuba and its diaspora is such that a too rapid series of changes occurring, especially without a strong hand at the helm of government, could turn to violence and result in crisis or even a bloodbath. While there is much opposition in Cuba to the Castro government it is disorganized and weak. And there is doubtless much support for him as well.

In particular the "Miami" Cubans are distrusted or at least disliked by a huge proportion of the island's resident population. Under these circumstances it is difficult to see how an alternative government to the one in power at the moment could take over in stable and peaceful conditions. If this is the case, then a policy seeking to overthrow Castro is ill-founded and counterproductive for the United States's own national interests. DoD is obviously concerned that the correct policy option is taken up. And it accepts completely that it is the immigration issue that is the most serious problem for the United States coming out of the Cuban situation of today and tomorrow.

The DoD has been the only official department of the U.S. federal government willing to go so far on Cuba and relations with it. And given its position on Cuba in the hey-day of the cold war, there have obviously been some major changes in the perception of the U.S. military on the Cuban situation as a whole. This change had been gradual to be sure, but there have been major changes. And as is shown in the Graham Amendment context, this could have a very significant impact indeed on the overall situation in one of the two players in this dispute.

On the drugs front not only DoD but also the DEA and some of the myriad other agencies of the U.S. federal, state and municipal

governments dealing with combating narcotics have been willing to go some way in acknowledging Cuba's helpful role. And while there has been no such dramatic moment of truth as with the Graham Amendment, the DEA and other agencies quietly go about working indirectly with the Cubans, and on specific occasions, doing so openly. Behind the scenes officials from these agencies act as a break in decision making on Cuba since they do not accept the suggestion that the island is either unhelpful or indeed part of the enemy camp in this field.

It is also true that international agencies have echoed some DEA statements, and especially the thinking (out loud) of General Barry McCaffery, ex-director of the agency already referred to above. Ronald Noble, the American serving as Secretary General of the International Organization of Criminal Police (IOCP-INTERPOL), called Cuba's efforts against drug trafficking "extraordinary." He especially lauded the nation's efforts under its current difficult circumstances, and said directly that he supported Cuba-U.S. bilateral cooperation on drugs.⁸⁰

This is important. It means that the DoD is not alone in suggesting a moderate approach to Cuba.⁸¹ And although that department is clearly the most important it has other agencies or at least important people in other agencies who share its view. This means that extremist positions are not taken as easily at face value in discussions on Cuba policy and that there is room for moderate views to be heard and potentially to be acted upon. It does not mean that an administration such as the current one has to consult such people because if it knows that it will not like the views it will get it can often simply avoid hearing them. But this is not as easy in a great democracy as it can be elsewhere.

It is also important to understand that this situation is reflected more in Cuba than might first meet the eye. In an authoritarian State, there is little room for the kind of public debate on foreign policy that one finds in the United States. Given the "siege mentality" in which Cuba not surprisingly lives, this situation is reinforced.⁸² Nonetheless, as is to be expected, there are moderates and extremists in Cuba as well and nowhere more than on the vexing issue of relations with the United States.

The current members of the Cuban armed forces have been raised and trained with the ever-present specter of a U.S. invasion, the attempted assassination of national leaders, Washington's attempts at subversion of the government, a history of confrontations with the United States and what are often viewed as its lackeys in Latin American regimes, and much else that leaves them with a perception of that country as most distinctly "the enemy."⁸³ The FAR are overwhelmingly loyal to the current government and to the ideals of

the Revolution even though they are hardly unaware of the ravages of the current situation where the Cuban people are concerned. The officer corps is influential, somewhat protected from the worst elements of the current disastrous economic situation, closely tied into the state and the Party, and a somewhat privileged part of society as a whole. Nor does it see any likely outcome to the present situation that would be better than that provided by the current government.

All of this means that one hears little criticism of government policy from military officers and that there is absolute loyalty in public to the official line. On the issue of confidence building with the United States then, one hears from senior officers what one would expect to hear—the official position. That official position is that political will is the key and the United States does not share that political will, that Cuba is small and asymmetries overwhelming, and sometimes even that further gestures cannot be attempted since everything that could be done has been done. Even here, however, one notices a distinction and considerable *nuance* when CBMs with the United States are discussed.

In the FAR, there is considerable respect for the armed forces of the United States. This is reciprocated in many cases by U.S. officers who have seen or studied the FAR. In the Cuban case, one hears this in terms of U.S. military professionalism, of its general seriousness, of its organization, power, and efficiency, just as with U.S. officers one hears praise of Cuban effectiveness, the generally positive African experience, the ability to make do, deterrence capabilities, and again general seriousness. In addition, one hears on both sides of the other's reliability—in drugs operations, anti-illegal migration activities, relations at Guantánamo, and the rest of the elements we have discussed above.

Cuban officers do not therefore constitute a bulwark of anti-American sentiment particularly at the personal level. They are serious about their job of national defense and the most likely source of attack is clearly the United States. But beyond that one hears much that is positive about the U.S. military, especially on professional issues. Indeed, they are known often to take on more dogmatic members of the Party and its subordinate organizations over anti-U.S. polemics. And there is little doubt that within government there are many influential officers who bring forward the collaborative efforts in which the two countries take part and the benefits for Cuba of such endeavors when discussions of relations with the United States are conducted. This was not always the case and it is the belief of this author that the changes are closely connected with confidence building in the forms mentioned above.

In the Cuban case, of course, there is one further factor here. Havana does believe that confidence building with the United States

would be a good idea, if only it could be achieved. And while it does not trumpet the fact, there is little doubt that in many diplomatic and military circles there is an understanding that much of what one is about in emigration control, antidrugs operations, and work in Guantánamo, as well as much else in foreign and defense policy, is closely related to bringing about a change of perception among key decision makers in the United States.

Lessons Learned and Conclusion

Confidence building is a so far little used means of bringing the two sides together here as in many other parts of the world, even though its limitations are particularly evident in this case. CBMs do exist and are functioning even if they are officially directly denied by one party and not given great emphasis by the other. Sectoral approaches can prove helpful in the context of the bilateral relationship by creating pockets of decision makers more willing to move forward with conflict resolution even if the effect can only be long term and may not be “transformational.” Defense, anti-illegal immigration, and antidrugs cooperation have been especially interesting areas in which to work and this is an interesting example of the potential that areas of “soft security” cooperation may hold in other conflicts.

There is limited confidence building occurring in the Cuba–U.S. relationship. It is easy to exaggerate this process or its implications but it is almost as easy to discount it altogether. There is no full transformation of elite views taking place that will replace past distrust with near-future confidence. But there is positive change occurring among key sectors of those elites. And while there is obviously no great political will to move forward rapidly at this moment with resolving the dispute amicably, at least in the United States, and no interest in Cuba in meeting U.S. demands for what is in effect, and yet again “regime change”; there is a perception in important circles that the dispute should be resolved peacefully and that the other side may be more trustworthy than extremists would have one believe. This is significant progress and something upon which perhaps more can be built. But it depends on the two sides feeling that the experience is positive. A threat to the progress made so far, and to any to be hoped for in the future, is the way that cooperation remains difficult and frustrating for both parties. This is especially true in the area of migrants but is also present far too often in the drugs field.

Chapter 6

Cuba, the FAR, and Other Countries: Has the Search for Friends Brought Results?

Introduction

Most of this book's discussion of the FAR's connections with the outside world has, naturally enough, centered on the long linkages with the Soviet Union and now Russia, with the Warsaw Pact in its time, with some also given to the important but very limited links currently in place with the armed forces of the United States. Worthy of some attention, however, given likely trends in the future, are the relations between the FAR and other countries that are not of a communist hue and that are less likely to produce much in the way of an international connection for the country. And something more must be said about the Chinese and Vietnamese connections in order to paint a clearer picture than has been possible so far.

Thus, the main subject of this chapter is the linkages that the FAR has been able to forge with countries outside the old Warsaw Pact or the remaining very reduced club of communist states although the latter must not be ignored where matters relating to their relationship with Cuba are important to understand the international linkages of the island's armed forces. The states to be discussed initially will be Canada, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Mexico, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. This discussion will then be moved to a wider context that will include regional dynamics of a multilateral kind and other states of the Americas as well as some outside. Looking at each of these countries will allow us to foresee future linkages that will be of potential interest to the FAR.

Canada

It is interesting to note that Canadian defense interest in Cuba goes back to even before the Confederation of the main British North American colonies in 1867. Under New France, the alliance between Versailles and Madrid ensured that the defense of the colonies of Spain and France would be seen as a linked issue by both these courts. Indeed, New France's greatest military hero, Pierre Le Moyne Sieur d'Iberville, died and was buried in Havana in 1706 during what was hoped would be the launch of a successful joint attack against the northern British colonies.¹ When Britain and Spain were allies in the wars against Napoleon, trade with British North America began again. Defense issues were also present, however, as mutual fears of U.S. expansion proved well founded.

In the 1860s, the colonies uniting to form Canada moved quickly to broaden their trade relations and sent out their first trade mission ever to Latin America in 1866. However, the results were disappointing. Mexico was in the midst of a civil war, Hispaniola was in crisis, and Cuba was not only in financial and economic crisis but was also shortly to enter into the ferocious Ten Years' War. There seemed little to hope for from the island and the dispatch of a further trade mission was to wait for several decades.²

By that time what had happened was, of course, that trade dependence on the United States over the years, and especially since the end of World War II, had become astounding. Despite repeated efforts by the governments of prime ministers John Diefenbaker (1957-1963) and Pierre Trudeau (1968-1984) to diversify trade, there was no way of bucking the trend. In light of this, the Conservative victory of 1984, far from returning an antifree trade government, provided one that was determined to accept the realities of what was more and more often called the "North American market" of the United States, Canada, and Mexico. In a new world, one of growing protectionism and trading blocs, the Conservatives argued that *force majeure* obliged the country to seek closer economic linkages with its powerful neighbor.³ Despite ferocious opposition, by 1988, free trade with the United States was a *fait accompli*.

During all these years, economic relations with Cuba had developed to a considerable degree. Trade was slow in growth although investment was not. By the 1890s Canadian firms were moving into the island in a significant way. British and Canadian investment was soon in a clear second place behind the United States. The Royal Bank of Canada, the Bank of Nova Scotia, and a variety of railway and other public utility companies paved the way for others.⁴ By World War II

Canada and Cuba were formal if indirect allies. The British embassy in Havana noted during the war that half of its business was actually Canadian.⁵ As a result a Canadian embassy was established in Havana in 1945. The relationship was now direct and substantial if hardly massive.

It must be said that the arrival of the Castro government was not met with universal pleasure in Canada. In addition, despite great popular sympathy for Castro as a leader, membership of NATO was sacrosanct in Canada and the cold war was at its height. And Canada's investments in Cuba made Ottawa nervous over the rhetoric and then the policies of the new government. There was not at first much indication that the United States and Canada were going to see the new Cuba in very different ways.

All of this changed in a surprisingly short time. Despite the Castro government's dramatic moves to the left, the Canadian position did not follow the U.S. lead of destabilization. Canada was hardly pleased with the takeovers of Canadian firms but it never questioned their legality nor did it fail to come to agreement with Cuba over them. And while relations were not warm in these early years they were "correct."⁶

Here again the security issue was not far away. Canada soon came under severe U.S. pressure to consider the Cuban Revolution as a security threat and thus a legitimate realm for bilateral cooperation. While Washington succeeded in getting the inter-American system to expel Cuba, Diefenbaker's nationalist government refused to see Cuba's Revolution as a threat or to cooperate with the United States in toppling it. Steadfastly resisting all blandishments, Diefenbaker steered a national policy which, while recognizing U.S. concerns, did not share them.⁷

The Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 was, however, to shake the Diefenbaker government's resolve. When the crisis broke, Canada was reluctant to take the Soviet missiles in Cuba as seriously as did the United States. And when the North American Defence Accord (NORAD) arrangements were to go on alert, Diefenbaker insisted that the Canadian level of alert not be as high as that for the United States.⁸ Here the prime minister appeared to have gone too far even for moderates in his cabinet. The ensuing crisis hurt the now minority Diefenbaker government and the next year it was defeated by Lester Pearson's Liberals, known to favor closer ties with the United States.⁹

Something had happened, however, to change the landscape. The Cuban issue was now alive and well in the Canadian body politic and while many wished a more loyal stance toward Washington on North American defense, few clamored for an anti-Cuban policy as part of

that.¹⁰ Indeed, Pearson could only cool slightly the relationship with Cuba. Instead, he knew an anti Cuban move would cost him with a public increasingly uncomfortable with the U.S. alliance as the War in Vietnam grew in intensity, the Dominican Republic invasion of 1965 took place, and many democratic governments in Latin America fell to rightist pro U.S. authoritarian movements. In addition, he felt that U.S. policy toward Cuba was likely merely to push the island ever more deeply into the Soviet orbit.¹¹

This mood continued until Pierre Elliott Trudeau won the elections of 1968 and became the prime minister. Trudeau lost no time in revising Canadian foreign policy, emphasizing economic independence and calling for a "Third Option" in foreign policy that gave Latin America and Cuba a greater place.¹² Guevara's death and the end of the "export of revolution" coincided with these events. While the United States was basking in its successful 1967 exclusion of Cuba from the inter American system, Canada began to make Cuba a closer friend. Cooperation programs were begun in a number of fields. And on Trudeau's 1976 official visit to Latin America, Cuba was firmly on the list of countries to be visited. Trudeau, the first NATO head of government to visit the island, called out at a mass meeting, "Viva la amistad cubana canadiense" (Long Live Cuban-Canadian friendship) and "Viva el Comandante Fidel Castro" and the two men went on to build a lasting personal friendship.¹³

Later, after differences over Cuban policy in Africa, Ottawa ended bilateral cooperation programs. While the friendship clearly continued, Trudeau distanced himself politically from Fidel. These were difficult times in the U.S. relationship and too soft a stand on Cuban actions in Africa could have cost the government dear.¹⁴ The real test for the relationship seemed to come, however, with the Mulroney government, elected in 1984. Promising to repair the damage to the alliance done by Trudeau, Mulroney quickly moved to reassure the United States on most issues. But in this trend, Cuba proved the sticking point. Relations with Cuba could be slightly cooled but there was no further *marge de manoeuvre* for Mulroney. Relations were still maintained at a correct level. Indeed, as Mulroney moved to join the Organization of American States in late 1989 he covered himself through saying that this would allow Canada to press for the rapid reincorporation of Cuba into the body. Indeed, he appointed a friend, Mark Entwhistle, as ambassador, perhaps the most successful choice ever made for a representative in Havana.

With the new government of Jean Chrétien elected in 1993, the Cuban issue was soon alive again. Entwhistle was retained and the government soon showed its more positive policy toward Cuba.¹⁵

In 1994, assistance programs started again. At the same time, Cuba was going through the worst moments of the "Special Period." In this new context, Canada's relative value for Cuba grew rapidly. Bilateral trade and investment increased enormously. And despite increasing links with the United States through free trade, there did not seem to be much linkage working against Cuba. Indeed, Canada angrily passed blocking legislation against the Torricelli Bill and fought stubbornly against Helms-Burton both in the United States and in international organizations.¹⁶ Security concerns were never very far below the surface where Cuban-Canadian linkages were concerned. As the cold war slackened Canada found ways to open up slightly to Cuba. Indeed, Ottawa found Cuba helpful in southern Africa especially as the years went on and Cuban policy was nuanced.

In this context, as early as the late 1980s, the National Defence College (NDC) of Canada and the FAR developed links. That Canadian military education institution of the defense ministry accepted an invitation to visit the island. While reluctant initially, even the U.S. students on the course reportedly found their government delighted with their opportunity to see the FAR close at hand. This visit was followed by invitations to MINFAR to send officers to study the Canadian military educational system. The likely end of most Soviet links meant that Cuba was considering setting up its own national defense college for its future senior officers. But the Cuban officers also visited tactical training centers, officer education establishments, such as the Royal Military College (RMC) of Canada and *Le Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean*, as well as Defence Headquarters. Officers and academics alike later described themselves as delighted when the NDC was taken as a model for Cuba's own *Colegio de Defensa Nacional (CODENA)*. It is interesting to note that, following the Canadian model, the course membership at the College was divided among serving FAR officers, party officials, those from the state administration, and finally some from social, youth, and other mass organizations.¹⁷

In 1993, Canada's first military attaché's office ever in Latin America was opened in Mexico City and was given accreditation also to Cuba. From the beginning Canadian military attachés were active in visiting Cuba and began lecturing annually at CODENA. In interviews with all of them they have mentioned the high quality of the questions posed by the students after their lectures. While Canadian senior officer and ship visits have not as yet occurred, they are openly debated now. Neither is a cheap affair and the current strapped straits of the Canadian and Cuban forces have not helped in the development of links. Indeed, a return trip to Canada of the CODENA,

as well as others to Canadian defense training establishments, had to be put on hold as a result of the Special Period.

Other events did occur at lower cost. The CODENA relationship was broadened to include not only the attaché but also other officers as well as the Canadian ambassador as occasional lecturers. In early 1996, a visit headed by a senior foreign ministry official, Jill Sinclair, was not only to the CODENA but also to the *Centro de Estudios de Defensa y Seguridad Internacional* (CEDSI), Cuba's military think tank on international security and arms control issues. In addition, the team visited MINREX to discuss arms control and peacekeeping matters, as well as centers looking at nuclear energy issues. Other informal visits followed involving serving Canadian Forces (CFs) officers. Later on, informal visits by students of the RMC took place within the context of Latin American military history.

There is currently just beginning to be a connection between a new think tank of retired officers of the FAR, connected with CEDSI but more independent, and called CEID (*Centro de Educación e Información de la Defensa*, or Centre for Education and Information on Defence). It is hoped that this connection develops not only with defense centers in Canada but also with strategic studies centers outside official circles and the Lester Pearson Peacekeeping Training Centre (PPC). The PPC has already received for its courses diplomats with defense experience from Cuba's prestigious *Instituto Superior de Relaciones Internacionales* (ISRI; or Advanced Institute for International Relations) and hopes to see Cuban instructors assist in future courses. In addition, it is hoped that MINFAR or at least the CEID can be interested in cooperation with the center, and in eventually sending both students and instructors to its courses.

Finally, as with many other countries, Cuba has long collaborated with Canada on counter-narcotics. The first accords were signed as early as Trudeau's 1976 visit. But several more have been agreed to since during the ministerial and prime ministerial visits of the 1990s. Canadian officials have termed bilateral cooperation "excellent." While in Canada the drugs issue is not seen in strictly security terms but rather as one of public health and order, there is a memorandum of understanding between the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Armed Forces whereby the latter supports the former in this field.¹⁸ This is an area of great potential cooperation where both Cuba and the United States perceive a "national security" interest.

It is difficult to imagine an early end to the FAR's difficulties in paying for its part of an increased connection. Thus the linkages mentioned constitute a good deal of what can be achieved at this stage. The CF do not place Latin America as a high priority given peace

operations worldwide, NATO, and the events of September 2001. And there is little doubt that especially after the decision not to go to war alongside the United States in Iraq in 2003, the National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa is keen not to appear too forward on building further its past links with Havana.

There is still room, however, for initiatives as those already undertaken show. But all that has been said should not hide from us the fact that neither side has shown much interest to date, the Canadians being far too underfunded and busy and the Cubans even more strapped for cash but in addition suspicious of where further cooperation is likely to lead. This is probably more the result of a number of Canadian policies in multilateral fora, such as support for humanitarian interventions that Havana sees as pro-United States, rather than on the bilateral scene.

Spain

As we have seen in the historical introduction to this volume, Spain's influence in Cuba is difficult to exaggerate. Yet as in the rest of Spanish America, so also in Cuba, the military traces of Spain are less obvious. One must remember that Spain was the enemy in the long and ferocious wars for independence. There was an interest specifically in reducing Spanish military influence in the decades after independence and the retention of what was kept or obtained later was more the result of a need for doctrinal texts in Spanish than any admiration for Spanish military methods.¹⁹

This pattern had a particular spin in Cuba. Here it was not a national army, successor to those of the wars of independence that took over. Rather it was an occupying army whose interests were that the new Cuban force followed strictly U.S. practice. In the Rural Guard, Spanish influence was restricted to a few texts where it was not possible to make any English translations available. No Spanish military practices, traditions, or approaches to defense were officially retained. However, the widespread Cuban admiration for Spanish courage, gentlemanliness, and decorum in uniform (*caballerosidad*, *hombria*, *hidalguía*) probably meant that more Iberian customs were kept than met the American officers' eyes.²⁰

It was apparently under Franco that a military attaché was attached to the Spanish embassy in Havana but nothing really came of this. Officially Cuba sided with the Republic in the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939, and many Cubans fought for the left. In addition, many refugees came to Cuba after the war and helped sustain the enormous Spanish cultural and personal connection with Cuba that immigration had maintained since independence.²¹ But many Cubans in fact

felt that Franco was good for Spain and that he would mean a no-nonsense regime of the anticommunist right.

Therefore it was a surprise for many observers when relations with the radical government of Fidel Castro seemed to go smoothly. Indeed, when the Spanish ambassador of the time clashed with Fidel he was soon removed by Madrid and replaced with someone more amenable. But Spain could not supplement the correct overall relationship with Cuba with anything military. Spain wanted a connection with the United States and was prepared to pay for it. Thus nothing daring could be considered.

The Special Period, with its economic reforms and relative opening to the international community, has also opened the door to an explosion in the Spanish connection. Spain is the first runner among foreign investors in Cuba. It was for some years Cuba's main trading partner as well. It is likewise a major source of tourism. There has been a military side to this renewed closeness. Spain's military attaché is the only one from a NATO country actually resident in Havana. He has had a role in organizing ship visits by Spanish naval vessels, the first from a NATO country to visit Cuba since the early 1960s. The current government in Madrid is extremely unlikely to go much further with the relationship at this time. But there is clearly much that could be done by the two countries if the governments were in agreement. Spain has much military material to sell. It has also an interest in expanding its influence in Latin America as a whole. However, the opposition of the United States is not taken lightly in Spain, the military dimension of this is more serious than others, and Madrid is annoyed at Havana's reluctance to take more seriously its debts to Spain. There is room for progress but little prospect in the near future.

This is especially true of the current state of affairs following the dissident trials of the spring of 2003. In many ways Spain led the European charge against the severe sentences meted out to dissidents. It may well be true that Madrid and Havana are currently suffering the worst relations for decades. Be that as it may it is not the time to suggest great advances in security cooperation to either side. And Spain's desires to back Washington as much as possible in the era of terrorism can be counted upon to hamstring many ideas that do surface in this regard despite the new government in Madrid and its greater friendliness with Havana.

France

The French army and air force have been models for many of those of Latin America. Latin America looked to France for much of its

cultural influences for many years after independence and even before. The French Revolution, even more than the American, was the model for many of those who made the Latin American rebellions against Spain.²² French political ideas were central to Latin American thinking for the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth. The French army was of course then the model for virtually all armies, including the Spanish and thus the Cuban militia.

Latin American armies were under massive French military influence, despite Waterloo, from the independence wars themselves. French texts, doctrine, ideas, structures, uniforms, and even weapons were imported wholesale. Only with the leadup to World War II and the defeat of 1940 were French missions done away with throughout Latin America, to be replaced by those from the United States. French military prestige in Cuba at the end of the Spanish period was great. But here again, the United States had no intention of having real French influence in its new territory.

In the *Mambí* ranks, however, the French had their influence. Many officers volunteering to help the Cuban rebels in those romantic and liberal times had had military experience in the armies of countries much influenced by the French. And Ignacio Agramonte, arguably the finest military commander that Cuba has ever produced, was deeply attached to French methods and indeed to France, and was little impressed by the pro-Americanism and even annexationism that was then so prevalent in rebel ranks.²³

Fidel Castro had certainly read much of the French military in his study of war, as would have been inevitable at that time. When in power he would certainly have been tempted by French arms when the U.S. arsenal was closed to him. But the decline of France since 1940, French dependence on the United States under the just ended Fourth Republic, and the war in Algeria must all have turned him to other suppliers who were in any case soon dissuaded from selling him arms by U.S. policies. In the event he opted for a limited level of Belgian and Mexican cooperation that soon ended as well.

In recent years France's relations with Cuba have developed. There is now considerable French tourism to the island. French investment has become important as well. And here again there has been a military dimension. French naval vessels followed their Spanish counterparts in visiting the island in recent years and became for a while among the most frequent foreign naval visitors to Havana. Whether such visits will result in more military connections between Paris and Havana is unclear. Obviously there is no desire to annoy the United States. On the other hand, the French are obviously impressed with the seriousness that Cuba has shown in combating the international

illegal drugs trade and that does interest Paris. Their forces based in their territories of Guadeloupe, Martinique, and French Guiana are involved in the wider Caribbean area and are trying to help the Haitians as well. There has even been a small French program of helping to train Cubans for work in the field.²⁴ But one will have to wait and see if these first steps will lead to anything more that might involve the FAR more directly. This is especially true as France has been among the most strident critics of Cuba following the 2003 Euro-Cuba crisis. Indeed, it is unclear if the training program has even survived the current chill.

The United Kingdom

The British have even more territories in the Caribbean and its neighborhood than do the French, and have several Commonwealth states as well with which they still have defense ties of one kind or another. Thus it might be imagined that in the security field they would be tempted to have a connection with the FAR. It is, however, the case that here again this connection is more indirect than direct. Once again it is in the area of antinarcotics that the security connection between London and Havana is most developed. The British have taken Cuba very seriously indeed in the drugs field, considering the Cuban security forces to be both serious and professional in their approach. This has stimulated considerable keenness in Whitehall to work with them. And while most of this connection comes through MININT and the TGF, it touches closely the regular FAR as well.

The British possessions most touched by the Cuban connection are of course the very close neighbors of the Turks and Caicos Islands to the north. But the British are also interested in their southern territory of the Cayman Islands. Both of these territories are problems for Britain in the sense that first they are closely connected to the money laundering activities so common in the Caribbean. But second, they represent large land and sea mass and they are on the route north from South America to the United States and more indirectly to Europe.

British security links to most of the Commonwealth Caribbean still exist. Britain maintains constant ship visits and cooperation, especially on the drugs issue but on natural disasters and more traditional defense matters as well, with most of its former colonies. Funds, training, technical assistance including the loan of military, police, and customs personnel, and air and naval units have been provided. This cooperation is most welcomed by these new states, most of which are small and face significant nontraditional security challenges.²⁵ Where

Cuba is concerned, London is, in relation to these independent countries, especially interested in the proximity of the island to Belize, the Bahamas, and Jamaica. But such is the nature of the Caribbean security scene that several other island states are of interest in the bilateral relationship, largely as a result of drug flow patterns that are now in place or that can be made workable for the highly sophisticated and rapidly reacting drug lords.

In Cuba, British interest is of course long established and whether historically in piracy or corsair activity, in formal attacks against Spanish Cuba, in the invasion and partial occupation of 1762, in the effort against the slave trade, or in the attempt to stave off U.S. incorporation of the island, it tended to be the British who acted with decisive impact on Cuba. When Cuba became independent it was British (and Canadian) investment that came second after that of the United States. And British arms sales supplied partially the needs of Batista when the U.S. arms embargo was applied right up to scandalously close to the dictator's fall.²⁶

London maintained correct relations with Cuba over the years of the Revolutionary Government largely as part of its tradition of dealing with any regime, however much one dislikes it, which has effective control of its territory. The British shared U.S. concerns, although to a lesser extent, about where Fidel was taking the island, and the United Kingdom certainly had a role in the speed of the drift of the new government toward the Soviet camp. In September 1959 when Fidel, desperate for arms but turned down by the United States, asked Britain to exchange the old Sea Furies in the Cuban air force for modern Hawker Hunter jet fighters, he was turned down.²⁷ With the Special Period's reforms and partial opening up, the British have expanded their presence. Tourism from Britain is booming although the British are not yet among the top source countries. And investment, while not at Spanish or Canadian levels, is significant.

It is in this context that the Anglo-Cuban security connection has developed. And as mentioned it is in the counter-narcotics field that it has flourished. Cuba's drugs trade is obviously much connected with the United States not only as the world's major market but also as Cuba's closest major neighbor. This has made many observers forget that there is a powerful European connection on the drugs issue as a result of the ease with which they get to European destinations from South America through Caribbean ports. The extent to which Dutch, French, and British territories (integrated into their metropolitan systems in terms of customs and immigration) in the Caribbean Sea are a means of relatively easy access to the European markets for illegal drugs ensures that those three countries, and with them the rest of the

European Union, are interested in cooperation with Caribbean countries to help stem the tide.

Of Cuba's 28 bilateral agreements with other countries on cooperation against the illegal drugs trade, it is certainly the one with the United Kingdom that has given the island the greatest assistance with its own program. It takes the form of a memorandum of understanding between the two countries allowing for close cooperation across a broad range of common interests in the area of interdiction. There is also a bilateral customs agreement in place that includes some elements of the anti-illegal narcotics programs of both states. And Britain's close connection with Cuba on this issue has helped Cuba in its arrangements on the same matter with the European Union and its members.²⁸ London is especially interested in Cuba's ability to intercept air and maritime movements of the drug lords' networks as well as in the search of individuals who travel from or through the island on the very active tourist routes now in place.

Three active air corridors pass over Cuba: Girón in the West, Maya in the center, and Nuevitás over the East. These link the northern and southern hemispheres with some 277 aircraft of regular airlines each day on a normal legal basis. This emphasizes Cuba's strategic position.²⁹ British studies have underscored this importance and the desire of the *narcos* to use Cuban airspace and the surrounding seas. The southern coastal areas of Granma and Guantanamo provinces and the northern equivalents in Camagüey and Holguín appear to be the favored zones for these activities.

Anglo Cuban counter-narcotics cooperation has been going on since 1994. A first major payoff for the British occurred in November 1998 when seven traffickers were captured at Havana Airport bound for the United Kingdom and coming from Montego Bay. They carried almost 38 kg of cocaine in 65 plastic clothes hangers and 9 plastic suitcases.³⁰ Even more dramatic was when the Cubans alerted the British authorities in May 1999 that the *China Breeze*, a suspicious boat with an equally suspicious crew, was behaving in ways linking it probably with illegal drugs. Acting on this information, two days later a British escort vessel, *HMS Marlborough*, patrolling in the Caribbean on antidrugs duty, sent a boarding party to the craft. Their search found 200 containers of cocaine aboard.³¹ The total weight of the shipment was some four tons. It is interesting to note that a fictional film account of this incident later became part of a Royal Navy recruiting video.

In this field, Cuba is interested above all in training opportunities for its personnel, in specialized equipment for its antidrugs services, and in information exchange. It was Havana that circulated in 1991 a

model for accords in this area. This stimulated an increase in the agreements in place between Cuba and other countries, especially those in Latin America.³² The British connection is, however, the largest and most dramatic cooperative arrangement in place. In November 1997, Ambassador Philip McLean announced that over the next year the United Kingdom would spend some \$300 million on programs with Cuba. This was during the visit of Peter Westmacott, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Director for the Americas, to Havana. The stay of such a senior diplomat in the Cuban capital to mark the event was a clear sign of the degree to which London took seriously Cuba's contribution in fighting drugs.

Westmacott presented on the occasion two suitcases of drug samples to the National Drugs Commission of Cuba, the key coordinating body in the national antinarcotics effort, in the presence of the organization's head, Roberto Díaz Sotolongo, who is also, it is important to note, the minister of justice. The samples would be used by MININT's Captain San Luis Academy for training Cuban specialists from the Customs Service in antinarcotics. The British ambassador termed the results of the bilateral cooperation "excellent" and Díaz Sotolongo replied that from his perspective Anglo-Cuban antidrugs collaboration was "professional and sustained."³³

The \$300 million was largely allocated for continuing training for Cubans working in the counter-drugs field. The cooperation had been largely related to transport connected with operational matters, the provision of means of communication, and consultation. In the future the extra funding would allow for expanded training schemes for Cuban workers. And this would include the unusual arrangement whereby not only would British experts come to Cuba to train local specialists but the latter would also travel to the United Kingdom for training. British experts have already given instructions to Cubans from the Customs Service and MININT at airports in Santiago and Havana. The program's expansion would mean that Cubans would be exposed directly and in situ to the workings of a highly sophisticated antidrugs agency.

In this regard Patrick Nixon, special representative for the United Kingdom in the antinarcotics field, stated in December 1998 his satisfaction with the bilateral program with Cuba. He suggested that the cooperation had resulted in a series of successful operations and that the intention was that the cooperation should continue. This was during a visit to Havana where he met with the minister of justice and members of MINREX and the Customs Service. During his visit the two countries also agreed to broaden the bilateral program.

The program has continued to this day. In 1999, the British Ambassador of the time, David Ridgway, said in Havana that the

Cubans were "magnificent professionals—and in this I am only repeating the opinion of our specialists—who have given a first-class welcome to our collaboration and we are very pleased with the results."³⁴ It is not known how Washington feels officially about this level of British cooperation. But Barry McCaffery and his colleagues must have been unofficially delighted that the British have stepped into the breach and are doing good work with their Cuban counterparts.

Despite all this cooperation in the antidrugs field, there has been little spillover of a direct kind into other fields of security cooperation. British warships have as yet not visited Cuban ports, even though the Royal Navy is kept abreast of drug-related intelligence coming out of Cuba and of possible use to its patrol vessels in the Caribbean or other friendly elements, and at least one Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) vessel has visited. It appears that more direct relations with the FAR will remain for some time through the attaché system, and some elements of the British military education system, rather like the Canadian experience.

The most recent manifestation of this tendency is the visit to Cuba of a group from the Royal College of Defence Studies in London, a prestigious and influential joint-service institution, in October 2002. Air Vice-Marshal Philip Roser headed the visiting study group to Cuba. The 11 students on the course came from six different countries and visited historic centers as well as receiving briefings on the economy and foreign and defense issues from Cuban officials. Roser commented that he hoped that the links between Britain and his institution on the one hand and Cuba and the NDC of Cuba on the other could be strengthened and help bring "friendly and warm relations" between the United Kingdom and Cuba. This was a visit at the highest levels ever from the British military point of view and suggested that London was prepared to see a wider connection in security matters than in the past.³⁵

This will require some effort. The British military attaché, like so many others, is not resident in Havana. Instead, he lives in Caracas, is merely cross-credited to Cuba, and visits the island only as required or thought worthwhile. Thus the connection between the two countries' forces (apart, of course, the MININT personnel) remains largely indirect. But they are clearly cooperating in steadily more direct ways as one can assess from the FAR's involvement in the antidrugs campaign and the RCDS and RFA visits. And in the negative flurry of accusations and counter-accusations that dominated so much of the relationship in 2003 it is interesting that this relationship does not appear to have been in any serious way affected.

Nations of the Caribbean Basin

The Caribbean Basin is of course not only where Cuba is located but is also the main zone for the transport of drugs from the main producer nations of South America to the main consumer nations of North America and Europe. In addition, the Basin has been a major area for the projection of Cuba's foreign policy over the years since 1959, and bilateral relations between Havana and the nations of the Basin have known many ups and downs over the decades since the Revolution. It is here that Cubans have been in direct action for the only time against American troops, in the latter's invasion of Grenada in 1983. Cuba has had special relations with the governments of that island, Guyana, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and several other countries and has been involved on more than one occasion in diplomatic or even military imbroglios with some of these states. The export of revolution phase of Cuban foreign policy took a toll on Caribbean patience with Cuba.³⁶ And the very popularity of Fidel, and of the Cuban revolutionary experiment, with large sections of Caribbean opinion, has made some governments less than keen on what they see as excessively close relations.

With that background it is fair to say that in general Cuban diplomatic relations with most of the countries of the region are very good. Only El Salvador, of all the countries of the region, fails to maintain relations with Cuba and of course, strictly speaking, this country does not have a coast on the Caribbean Sea. Fidel's visits to island nations of the area have been enormously successful and Cuba has received literally thousands of students from almost everywhere in the region, sending doctors and other assistance to virtually all of those countries at one time or another. The impact of the policies that produce these gestures, while difficult to judge on a day-to-day basis, has by all accounts been truly massive where public opinion is concerned, and has doubtless affected government policies toward Havana. Caribbean heads of government have nearly all visited Cuba in recent years and Havana has opened four new embassies in regional countries over the last short while.

The security relationship has been more difficult for Cuba to establish or maintain since the end of the cold war and the beginning of the Special Period. U.S. opposition to Cuba, the financial straits of the government in Havana, the end of most of the appeal of socialism internationally and regionally, the arrival of more conservative governments in many capitals, and fears of opposing Washington at a time when a new inter-American economic system is at least in theory being forged combine to make Cuban attempts to strengthen cooperation difficult.

The Bahamas and Jamaica

The two island states of Jamaica and the Bahamas are among Cuba's closest neighbors. This is not only true in the geographic sense but also in the historical and in some ways even in the cultural sense. Despite the difference in language the three countries share much. Columbus arrived in Cuba via the Bahamas that he discovered first. The islands at that time had populations made up of similar peoples and similar cultures.

Jamaica was colonized first by the Spaniards from Hispaniola and Cuba. Until its conquest by the English it was a Spanish colony with many links to the larger northern island. Even later the contraband trade that was such a large part of colonial Cuba's economic life was conducted largely with Jamaica. And corsair activity against and from Cuba was usually connected with this island. The exiled revolutionaries of 1868-1878 often established themselves in Kingston. With independence and the various bursts of prosperity in Cuba, the demand for labor on more than one occasion brought Jamaicans to the northern island to work. Many of them settled in Cuba providing the country to this day with many British surnames and even a few native-tongue Anglophones.

The Bahamas never had as significant a population as did Jamaica. The 700 islands of the nation of today are mostly unpopulated and those with people, with the exception of New Providence, home to the capital city of Nassau, have few of them. With only some 140,000 people today, spread across such a vast archipelago, the size issue remains important and has in part meant that, despite Bahamian tourism in Cuba and a number of initiatives on Cuba supported by Nassau in Caribbean forums, the diplomatic connection is still maintained at a mere consul-general level.

The connection with Cuba on the historic side is largely one of the islands' use as a base or drop-off zone for expeditions in support of anti-Spanish rebellions in colonial times. While pirates and corsairs did use the islands on occasion these were fewer in number compared with Jamaica or more southerly islands. The Revolutionary government arrived in Havana as Jamaica was reaching independence and a decade and a half before that result was achieved in the Bahamas. In its drive to break out of U.S.-imposed regional isolation, Havana courted the new government in Kingston. Indeed, some would argue it interfered in the new country's domestic affairs. Whatever the truth, the connection knew many ups and downs over the successive years with prime ministers of Jamaica usually divided between admirers and detractors of Cuba. There were few who were indifferent to Fidel.

The same did not occur with the Bahamas when it reached independence in the early 1970s. Fidel may well have learned his lesson from other Caribbean experience. Or the strategic position of the islands so terribly close to Florida may have meant that there was too much danger to a forward policy there. Or it may have simply been that the prospects for close relations with Nassau were never in the cards. For whatever reasons the relationship with the Bahamas, while correct, was never close. And on occasion it was far from happy. Indeed, an FAR aircraft actually fired on a Royal Bahamas Defence Force patrol boat, the *Flamingo*, in May 1980, in an incident where that craft had seized two Cuban fishing vessels in Bahamian waters. There were seven Bahamian casualties, three of which were fatal. The event was compounded when the FAR sent troops to the Bahamas' Ragged Island in pursuit of the survivors. Fidel later apologized for the incident but only after the Bahamian government threatened to take the incident to the U.N. Security Council.³⁷

With the end of the cold war and the beginning of the Special Period came a series of proposals aimed at reorganizing the hemisphere in political but especially economic terms. The rise of free trade in North America brought significant fears to all the Caribbean nations, and Jamaica and the Bahamas were no exception. On the other hand they were keen on anything that might bring them into the fold of a new body that would include the vital North American markets, central to their prosperity.

Thus while the end of the cold war meant that relations with Havana should prove mutually profitable, other trends proved otherwise. Annoying the United States was not an option for countries truly desperate to keep Washington's goodwill. At the same time public opinion in Jamaica, and to some extent also in the Bahamas, seemed increasingly to wish for better relations with Havana.

The security relationship between Cuba and Jamaica can be summed up as small. There is an antinarcotics accord between the two capitals but given the resources of both nations, it is not as actively pursued as are those with countries that can actually help either or both countries in significant ways. There is recognition on both sides that more should be done since the parts of both countries most affected by the illegal traffic are those most close to the other. But the reality is that it proves more useful for each to use its contacts with other, richer powers to move forward their own programs. This may change over time but does seem to apply at the moment.

The closeness of the Bahamas, and the vital link it provides in the drug traffic chain, makes security cooperation in at least this area seem probable. But for some of the same reasons as with Jamaica little has

been done to date. There is an accord for cooperation but not as much achieved under its rubric as would surely be possible with greater resources. On the other hand the exchange of information has led to several interceptions of traffickers. It might be worthwhile to mention that there is also bilateral cooperation between the two countries on illegal immigration, as one might expect given "balsero" issues not only with Cuba but also for both countries over recurrent issues with Haiti. The role of the United Kingdom in both countries' antidrugs efforts may be able to help here but the overwhelming presence of the United States in Bahamian life works against this. Barring a crisis it is difficult to see how more extensive and important cooperation in security matters can occur between the FAR and the Royal Bahamian Defence Force.

Nicaragua and Venezuela

It may at first sight appear odd to combine these two countries for the purposes of analyzing their relations with anyone. But in the case of their connections with Cuba, the reasons are clear. Both have at one time or another had a special relationship with the island's revolutionary government. In the case of Nicaragua the Sandinista movement of the 1960s and 1970s was under heavy Fidelista influence before and after its victory in 1979. In Venezuela, the government of Hugo Chávez is doubtless at the moment Cuba's best friend in the whole hemisphere.

Nicaragua and Cuba still have a slight security arrangement but one whose actual import is easy to exaggerate. As mentioned, Fidel had a major role in giving advice to the various leftist anti-Somoza movements of the 1960s and 1970s in ways that pushed them into uniting into the single movement that was to take power in 1979. Cuba gave the Sandinistas aid and training over much of that time but did so with an eye on Washington's likely reactions. Cuban aid was not as important as was that from a variety of other countries that were on good terms with the United States, thus saving the Sandinistas from being accused early on of being too revolutionary.

Once in power the Sandinistas soon found that their reforms were not going to be accepted by the United States and that a counterrevolutionary movement would be organized by that great power in order to unseat them. Cuba alone or in concert with the USSR began to give significant assistance and arms to the Managua government. While the Soviet connection could be exaggerated it would be difficult to do so with the Cuban.

Not only did Cuba send teachers and medical staff to reinforce the Sandinistas' attempts to change things in the social and economic

spheres in Nicaragua, but it also, in the light of likely U.S. military or paramilitary action, began to send major amounts of arms and instructors. The Cuban military mission to Nicaragua became one of the biggest ever and that country soon had a significant armored force and anti-invasion capability that, it was hoped, would act as a deterrent to any U.S. invasion. Some 4,000 Cubans would eventually serve with the Nicaraguan armed forces although many of these worked in the fields of primary education and health projects in which that military force was involved.³⁸

The United States did not intend, however, to bring down the Sandinistas with a full-scale military attack on their country. Instead the strategy developed in Washington called for the U.S.-organized and bankrolled *contras* to conduct a long war that would gradually exhaust the Nicaraguan economy. This "war" would also oblige Nicaragua to conscript its youth to fight the rebels and these efforts would cause people to slowly lose faith in the Sandinistas' ability to bring progress and peace to the country. After almost a decade of the application of this strategy, a truly shattered Nicaraguan people voted for peace in the elections of 1990 when the United States promised that by throwing out the Sandinistas they would ensure good relations with Washington, end the contra war and therefore conscription, and that there would be a lifting of the embargo. Fidel recommended throughout restraint to the Sandinista leadership and while he probably did not think the idea of an election at the time a good one, once held he proposed that under no circumstances should there be any thought of resisting its results. It is interesting to note that in the worst days of the contra war, it appears that Managua actually approached Havana for the assistance of Cuban troops. The request was politely refused. On the other hand the soon to be infamous General Ochoa was sent to the country as a very senior and experienced military adviser in order to show the degree to which Cuba wished to help but not in ways Havana considered both dangerous and counterproductive.

Since 1990 the Nicaraguan Armed Forces have become just that, replacing the title *Ejército Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (ESLN, or Sandinista Army of National Liberation) with a rather more fully "national" and less visibly ideological title. This was not immediate. The Chamorro government moved slowly in dealing with a tiger, which it was not certain, was entirely asleep.³⁹ Thus the armed forces of the new government had a force which still had close links with the FAR and Cuba. And while the Cuban military mission was soon withdrawn from Nicaragua, a military attaché remained in Managua as did a Nicaraguan officer at an equivalent post in Havana. He is still there

14 years later. The levels of ex-Soviet weaponry and equipment in the Nicaraguan arsenal have remained high given the lack of funds in the country to modernize stocks. Thus alongside Peru, Cuba and Nicaragua share both the advantages and disadvantages of this sort of weaponry in a Latin America generally dominated by U.S. weapons.⁴⁰ The disadvantages are obvious as such materiel "rusts out" and is replaced with difficulty. The advantages relate to the extremely low prices for such equipment, and its spare parts, on the international market as a result of Soviet collapse. Neither Cuba nor Nicaragua has been financially able to take much advantage of this favorable situation but there is at least in the long term some potential for them to do so.⁴¹

With time the connection has of course weakened. A new generation of Nicaraguan young officers has changed the old Sandinista army dramatically even though there is both nostalgia and respect for the "good old days" of a proud national army standing up to U.S. pressure. But most of the new generation of servicemen understand very well that those days are gone and work with the new situation. And while there are still many senior officers from the old army, they too seem to have turned the page.

Thus Cuban real influence is now close to nil in the Nicaraguan armed forces whatever nostalgic reasons for it to continue might still exist. And there seems little likelihood of this changing. The Nicaraguan attaché in Havana is no longer as busy as in those halcyon days of the special relationship but his Cuban counterpart in Managua is doubtless able to watch Central America on the spot and that must be useful for the FAR as they are left nearly blind on the intelligence front.

Venezuela

Venezuela offers what is surely the most interesting case of a country with very good relations with Cuba. Castro was an admirer of Venezuela's great democratic leader of the 1950s, Rómulo Betancourt, but once president, Betancourt had little time for his radical *aficionado*. In the face of rising U.S. opposition to his government, Fidel called on Venezuela for support at a major level and in ways requiring Venezuela to run major political risks. Betancourt received Fidel in his capital but made little secret of his total rejection of the Cuban's requests for some sort of Havana-Caracas axis in opposition to the United States and its role in the hemisphere.

Things quickly went from bad to worse. Cuba was the enemy for the Venezuelan armed forces of the 1960s as the then government faced a small but on occasion vigorous insurrectionary movement

during the years of the export of revolution phase of Cuban foreign policy. Cuban–Venezuelan relations over these years were truly terrible and Venezuelan officers were trained to consider the communist threat to Latin America, using its Cuban beachhead, as serious and all encompassing.

Relations improved in the 1970s. The Cuban government showed considerable interest in the coup attempts by the young Hugo Chávez as the end of the cold war took shape. Here was a radical if military reformer, clearly an admirer of Fidel, and a person with a fiery approach to domestic change and to the international environment's inequities. Chávez was of course a military man, Special Forces-trained, and hardly a traditional leftist.⁴² He was more of the reformist stripe of Latin American military officer, suspicious of the Venezuelan left but determined to bring dramatic change to his country. After the defeat of his coup attempts, Chávez chose the electoral route to power; he quickly won it and began a series of constitutional and other reforms, which, while doubtless smacking of insufficient democratic norms, did go directly to the public for its support. And this he got.

Fidel courted Chávez but the latter also courted the former. Soon after assuming power, Chávez met Castro. Within months Cuba and Venezuela, the latter enjoying high oil prices, had signed a number of cooperative agreements. Havana was to have access to petroleum on a special basis underwritten by the Venezuelan state. Cuba was to repay the favor by sending teachers to rural Venezuelan areas where native-born Venezuelans were reluctant to teach. In addition, Cuba, with its magnificent record in sports, would send large numbers of physical training instructors to Venezuela. The accords seemed to be “made in heaven” for Havana as Cuba would provide something easily obtainable there—good teachers and sports coaches—while ensuring the arrival of vital oil products for the only slowly recovering economy. Other arrangements involved antinarcotics cooperation, the provision of doctors for rural and poor urban areas of Venezuela, the training of medical students, and much more. Here was an arrangement with mutual benefits but from which Cuba and its government could actually draw significant results.

In this context, the military view of Cuba among Venezuelan officers was necessarily to change as well, and this transformation of perception proved to be not nearly as difficult to achieve as one might have imagined. The generation of officers of the anti-Castro years had nearly disappeared from the Venezuelan armed forces. And Caracas' foreign policy for much of the 1970s and 1980s had been one of building bridges with Cuba. Such was Cuban local prestige in many

sectors that the Venezuelan armed forces seemed willing to forgive and forget past differences, and relations between Havana and Caracas by the time of the Contadora peace initiative in Central America in the mid-1980s were very good indeed.

As mentioned, the new government of Hugo Chávez was anxious for a stronger Venezuelan national connection with Cuba and for the armed forces of the country to have the same with the FAR. And while Chávez was keen on such a link, Castro was apparently determined to establish it soon and forcefully and then profit from it to the utmost. In many ways the Chávez government's arrival was the brightest spot on the Cuban horizon in the early- to mid-1990s as the Special Period continued and its effects cut ever deeper.⁴³ And while oil provision arrangements have proven difficult to manage, with Cuba being asked to pay cash on time and on a constant basis, it does appear that transactions are arranged in ways that the real prices that Havana pays are at least lower than official price levels would be and that on the whole the oil connection has been a highly advantageous one for Cuba.

Even Chávez had to recognize, however, that there was only so much of a link that could be established between the FAR and his own forces. Cuba had many needs but little to offer in exchange. And for long-standing historic reasons, the armed forces of Venezuela had become dominated by the doctrine, training, equipment, weapons, and ways of thinking of those of the United States.⁴⁴ A large percentage of the officer corps had been on course in the United States or Panama. All manner of personal links had been established with that superpower's military and Venezuelan officers enjoyed greatly postings to Washington and many other army posts, ports, and air bases in the United States. And the absolute dominance of the United States in the inter-American security system worked to ensure that Venezuelan personnel tended to see U.S. leadership as something natural, historic, and often profitable for them institutionally, and on occasion even personally in terms of perks, postings, and special allowances.⁴⁵

This would not prove an easy nut to crack. Nothing Cuba could offer the Venezuelan military could in any way compare with what the United States provided them. Indeed, the attempt at building a connection occurred exactly as the FAR entered the most difficult period ever known by the institution. If Venezuela wanted to build a connection it would have to pay for its construction alone. Cuba could receive delegations and strut its remaining stuff, but it could do little more. The view of anti-aircraft guns being towed by bicycles through Havana's streets on major parades could hardly be positively impressive to armed forces accustomed to having modern weaponry purchased

from either the United States or from Europe.⁴⁶ Military sports and cultural events on a reduced level were organized. There were visits and exchanges of information. An accord for cooperation on antinarcotics was signed. But little more could be done other than the odd ship visit set up. This was not the mark of a profitable and important military connection.

Chávez knew of course that many of his policies were annoying the United States. The prospect of doing further, potentially great, damage to the relationship with that country by establishing too close military links with Cuba did not escape his thinking. Talk of a "Caracas-Havana Axis" was already damaging to many of his wider objectives and while remaining true to the Cuban connection overall, he did not push too far on the military side. His project for a Latin American collective security arrangement, excluding the United States, had got nowhere despite its being actually presented at the Defence Ministerial of the Americas in Manaus, Brazil at the ministers' meeting in 2000.⁴⁷ It was greeted with deafening silence in a hemisphere where U.S. power was dramatically on the rise. Under these circumstances it could be said that in the midst of educational, sport, foreign policy, and many other initiatives, the security side has recently been left somewhat in the cooler.⁴⁸ This is perhaps natural and in no way means the relationship is not built on solid ground as the mutual loyalty of the two countries has shown over time.⁴⁹ Cuba proved its loyalty to Chávez in the days of the failed coup against him of April 2002. Havana's denunciation of the "putsch" was immediate and strident. Much was made of the embarrassment of the U.S. Ambassador to the OAS, who had been so obviously delighted with this coup after his country had been busily denouncing previous ones throughout the hemisphere.

Even so, in the months since the coup attempts Chávez has had to be more, not less, careful in choosing his friends. While doubtless grateful for Cuba's unwavering support during the coup, he has not since moved to greatly enhance the Havana connection. He was pleased to see the United States reduce somewhat its opposition to his government in the wake of its clearly mistaken support of the *golpistas* of April and as a result of the probable need for Venezuelan oil in case of a war with Iraq. But Chávez is no doubt wary of an army whose total support is far from in the bag, and where the Cuban connection is a central point in the campaign to discredit him mounted by the opposition in that highly polarized nation, and he has made no further efforts, at least visible or obvious ones, to build a connection on the military front with the FAR.⁵⁰ This is likely to remain his policy well into the future.

That having been said, his admiration for Castro and his revolutionary experiment remains part and parcel of his rhetoric and of his political convictions. As late as October 2002, on the occasion of the departure of the first 271 sports specialists Cuba had loaned to Venezuela for an 18-month training tour, Chávez heaped praise on the Cuban leader and his revolution. One day before his own national "Day of the Soldier," on the occasion of the Cuban coaches' departure ceremony, he praised Cuba's famed revolutionary military leader Ché Guevara as an example to all.

With 171 more Cubans arriving the same day for the next phase of the program, Chávez called Cubans "true revolutionaries" and "internationalists." Linking his own ideas with the Cubans in his concluding remarks, he referred to the need for deep reform in Latin America, saying, "Cuba has always stood at the vanguard of this battle and embarked on a new path. The Bolivarian ('Venezuelan' in the language of the Chávez government) people have now joined them; the remaining peoples of the continent will gradually join us as well."⁵¹ Castro does not hear this sort of language from any other capital city in Latin America even now that there are more at least left-leaning governments in Brasilia, Quito, and perhaps Buenos Aires as well, and only rarely from elsewhere. It is more than welcome to his ears. But visits between the two leaders are at least a bit more rare now than when Chávez first came to power. Nonetheless they are still frequent. The limits of the relationship, for the time being, are seemingly as obvious to Castro as they are to Chávez.⁵² Nowhere is this more the case than on defense matters where the establishment of a bilateral relationship of importance would merely be an invitation to extremists in the United States to call for its end. This situation will be worth monitoring in the light of the seemingly more optimistic mood in which the two leaders find themselves as of 2005.

Mexico

Mexico has without doubt been over time Cuba's staunchest friend in the Americas. Alone in the OAS in resisting Havana's suspension in the 1960s, Mexico continued a highly independent policy on the issue of the Castro government's legitimacy. Indeed, at various times Mexico came to the rescue diplomatically and economically when the island was passing through difficult times. The most dramatic of these was probably related to the oil accords of the 1980s, arrangements that allowed Havana some breathing room in the vital energy sector at a time of difficulties of access for it. And even in the very trying days

of the Cuban Missile Crisis, President Adolfo López himself noted for public consumption "our relations with Cuba continue to be perfectly normal based on the unmovable principle of non-intervention."⁵³ Except in indirectly helping to allow the Mexican government to more easily manage the nation's leftists, Havana could not return the favor very often.

Even then, however, the military connections between the two countries were not strong although they had been immensely so in colonial times when the defense of both was the responsibility of the viceroy in Mexico City. The Mexican armed forces consider themselves to be "revolutionary" and the inheritors of a strong revolutionary tradition going back to the beginning of the twentieth century and the overthrow of the Porfirio Díaz regime and the subsequent 15 years of civil war and revolution.⁵⁴ The rhetoric of the armed forces was from then until the defeat of the PRI in 2000 that of revolution, reform, popular linkages, and the rest. If the PRI was an institutionalized revolutionary party, the forces were its armed fist. Civic action programs, conscription and ideas of the army as the school of the nation, and a reserve forces system connected with development all reinforced this idea of the armed forces, nation building and the links between revolutionary ideas and the military institution in place to defend them, and the regime professing them.⁵⁵

In fact of course this tended to be just rhetoric. The armed forces in Mexico supported an exclusionist regime bent on self-perpetuation in power. They were repeatedly used to suppress dissent. In 1968 they quelled a student protest, embarrassing to the government that was about to host the Olympic Games, with ferocity and greatly excessive force. Real revolutionary credentials were no longer obvious in the "revolutionary" armed forces, if indeed they ever had been.

Under these circumstances it was unlikely that the FAR and the Mexican military were going to establish close links. It must also be said that despite traditional harsh words for the United States, the Mexican military was on many issues a full member of the inter-American security system. While it did not join bodies such as the conferences of commanders of the armies, navies, and air forces of the Americas when they were founded as anticommunist initiatives in the early 1960s, nor take part in a number of exercises with similar aims, Mexico did sign the Rio Pact, did send officers to the Inter-American Defense Board and its Defense College, did acquire the bulk of its weapons and equipment in the United States, and has for long had a large number of its personnel attend training courses in that country.

One does not want to exaggerate this. There has also been a real rejection of much coming from north of the border on the part of the Mexican armed forces since the hey-day of good relations during World War II.⁵⁶ However, it is not true that Mexico was able to isolate itself entirely from the dominant military context of the hemisphere and the world over those years. Mexican nationalism, while strong and real, was not omnipotent. And the small but real Mexican-U.S. military linkages extant before their great growth since the mid-1990s should not be forgotten.

The Mexican military accepted that it was important, for largely domestic reasons related to the revolutionary image of the PRI and of the forces themselves, to have what would be seen as a pro-Castro policy in foreign affairs and to appear to be standing up to the Americans when they tried to destroy a revolutionary effort for change in the hemisphere. But they did so without great love for the Cuban leader. Mexico was simply too important to the United States for the latter to let the irritant of Mexico's support for Cuba impinge too greatly on their own bilateral relationship with their southern neighbor. Thus the Mexican military did not see their country's Cuban policy as actually gravely endangering national security. And they could therefore publicly and privately live with it.

This did not mean that a military connection was either sought or established. Many in the Mexican military admired, at least privately, the military successes of Castro's tiny forces in 1956-1959. But they neither liked nor accepted that Cuba should export its revolution and they were fearful on more than one occasion that the spread of the Cuban Revolution would affect negatively Mexico's unstable political life. They were thus, in general pleased when insurgent movements across Latin America were gradually and almost completely eliminated in the late 1960s.

The whole of this context has changed in the massive upheaval to Mexican foreign relations of the last decade. Relations between Havana and Mexico at the official level have probably never been worse. The personal relationship between presidents Fox and Castro is a shambles after the comments made by Fidel on Mexico's chosen future path in 2001 and even more so in the events surrounding the Monterrey Summit of April 2002, where each of the two leaders left feeling betrayed by the other and Castro not only abandoned the conference in a huff but also produced for public consumption private conversations between himself and Fox that did indeed appear to show a president willing to do anything to curry favor with Washington. A further serious incident at the Mexican Embassy the same year, involving unpleasant security force deployments as well as physical damage,

underscored the deteriorating relationship. To add insult to injury, Cuba's foreign minister, referring to Mexico's losing its patience with Cuba on human rights and changing its long-standing voting pattern at the human rights debate in Geneva, said that future good relations with Havana would depend on Mexico seeing the error of its ways in this field. And he chose to do so on the Mexican National Day reception in September 2003.

Mexico had already been publicly vilified in Fidel's speeches for its "entreguismo" (selling out) to U.S. power in the wake of the end of the cold war and the new unipolar era.⁵⁷ The signing of the North American Free Trade Accords horrified Fidel as it appeared to show him that Mexico was not only turning its back on its historic and cultural links with Latin America, but was also moving more to the right and to a total linking of its future with that of the United States. Fidel correctly noted that this would automatically change Mexico's close ties with Cuba.

Those ties, seemingly stronger than ever as Cuba opened up in the face of the Special Period's horrors, were of course significant. Mexican capital was in with the first in the *apertura* and was soon visible in tourism, public utilities, agriculture, communications, and several other fields. But already in the mid-1990s this situation was in trouble as Mexico reeled from one economic crisis to the next. Most Mexican holdings were sold in light of these blows and the Mexican presence in Cuba was reduced markedly in all of these sectors.

This was minor, however, when compared with larger trends in Mexican foreign policy. NAFTA became for governments from Salinas to Fox the key plank of all policy, not just in the foreign field. The optimism generated by joining the "first world" was used to show just how much progress was being made. Under the previously nationalist PRI, or under the avowedly pro-American Fox government, the U.S. connection became the bedrock of Mexican policy toward the rest of the world.

Cuba could have been perhaps even more useful to a pro-U.S. government under these circumstances, however paradoxical that might seem at first glance. As in many other parts of the Americas, links with Cuba could help prove to domestic groups of importance not only on the left but also in nationalist circles, a government's independence in foreign policy. This was certainly true of even nationalist PRI governments in the past. And the new breed of Mexican governments, facing since the 1980s heavy criticism of their policies coming from the nationalists, could well have used this as they had in the past for this purpose.⁵⁸

Circumstances intervened, however, to make this impossible. One of these was Fidel himself. His criticisms of Mexican policy became

more strident. He continually accused Mexican leaders of having abandoned the most sacred traditions of nationalism in a crass grab for greater prosperity at any cost. Such comments became both more frequent and more indiscreet as the Zapatista rising was defeated in 1994 and no effective reform effort made in its aftermath. President Zedillo came in for much more of a tongue lashing than had even Salinas. And attempts to smooth over such comments on the part of MINREX and even *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* (SRE—Mexico's foreign ministry) personnel became steadily less effective.

The fact was (and is) that Havana and Mexico City were (and are) on collision courses in terms of their foreign policy agendas, even in the wake of the Iraq War, and many deceptions for Mexicans of all political stripes where U.S. policy was concerned. Mexican leaders have, despite all the difficulties involved, joined most other Latin American elites in believing that what is called neo-liberalism is truly "the only game in town." Mexican ideas on their northern neighbor, on independence, on sovereignty, on natural resources control, on defense, and on the role of the state have been shaken to their foundations by the events of recent years and the result has been an acceptance of an agenda that looks more like the direct opposite of traditional Mexican foreign policy than any continuation thereof. And while we may doubt whether this trend will continue, other real options are few and far between for the country's future.

All of this is opposed root and branch by Fidel Castro and of course by Mexican nationalists as well. And Fidel is of course playing to this audience, always sensitive to such still "hot" matters as immigration, the civil rights of Mexicans working in the United States, the operations of U.S. agents within the national territory, and much else. Mexico was for so long the leader in Latin American rejection of U.S. leadership of the hemisphere that getting accustomed to their no longer playing that role is difficult for much of Latin America and many Mexicans, but especially, and for obvious reasons, for Cuba.

Cuba's foreign policy has changed greatly in recent years and particularly as a result of the end of the cold war. But it is still running on at least recognizable tracks known to the world for decades. Mexico's foreign and defense policy has been changed from top to bottom. Thus obviously the closeness of the two countries had, to some extent at least, to be lost in the process. Cuban policy changes are of importance here as well. Since the early 1990s, the Ibero-American Summit arrangements have become very important to the country although the Conference's human rights and democracy

declarations have often stuck in Cuban throats. Havana has accepted that the vast problems of the new era, and especially those of Latin America, will have to be dealt with through international collaboration and not through mere resistance or calls for revolution.

Despite this, Cuba is of course still following major policy thrusts in place for many years. It argues forcefully for a new international economic order. It wants to see what it views as the *real* self-determination of peoples, not that of governments cut off from those peoples' true needs. It opposes U.S. leadership of the world community. It does not believe in U.S.-led attempts at trade liberalization, commercial regulation, and concerted political and military collaboration. It still proposes revolutionary, and even socialist, answers to many problems affecting humanity. It continues to assert the value of sovereignty as the bedrock of any effective international order and the only defense for the weak.⁵⁹ None of this any longer really interests official Mexico although, as mentioned, this may be changing.

In the specific military field, Mexico has quietly ditched its historic rejection of U.S. dominance in defense. As seen above, with the exception of World War II, Mexico has not historically cooperated closely with the United States in defense. Despite many formal accords, the Mexican armed forces had long been kept as far from their U.S. counterparts as was practical. Mexican strategic planning gave priority to defense of the nation in the case of another U.S. attack.⁶⁰ Mexican personnel were brought up, in a military sense, on a rejection of U.S. imperialism. All this is past. Since 1994 economic and political trends leading to close cooperation with the northern neighbor have been joined by others in defense. The shattering experience of the Zapatista rising in Chiapas led to ever closer defense cooperation, major purchases of weapons and equipment from the United States, and a vast increase in the training of Mexican officers, NCOS, and even other ranks in the United States. Sovereignty issues were jettisoned in the rush to a level of cooperation never imagined earlier. And nationalist officers were pushed aside in order to promote those willing to work with the new order.

Mexican-Cuban military cooperation had at no time been close since the end of the colonial era in the 1820s. But it is highly unlikely to develop at all in the context of the closest of relations with the U.S. armed forces, and the tying of Mexico in the security field to that country. Mexico City has recently even been trying to sell the idea of a sort of North American defense system across the board in security affairs.

There is clearly no room for Cuba or the FAR in these trends. Gone are the days when Raúl Castro, as in 1975 for the one hundredth and sixty-fifth anniversary of Mexican Independence, could be invited as a military guest of honor to Mexico City and be treated as a hero by the armed forces there. None of this is even imaginable today.⁶¹ And Cubans can only look aghast at what they see as the surrender of the proudest of Mexican military traditions. While Cuba maintains a military attaché in Mexico, his job is unlikely to include organizing defense cooperation unless there is a revolution in the way Mexico sees security. And there certainly seems little likelihood of that sort of thing occurring for a very long time indeed although it cannot be excluded entirely in the light of the shocking problems for Mexico in 2003 related to the Iraq War.

The Wider Region and Other Countries

The assertion, often made, that Cuba has been successfully isolated internationally, has been shown to be simply inaccurate given that Havana has formal diplomatic relations with at least 177 states and the capital abounds with diplomats, embassies, and consulates, and many agencies of international organizations. The formal isolation imposed by the arrangements made by the OAS states and the Pan-American system as a whole in 1962 and 1967 has largely disappeared. As early as the mid-1970s, the United States admitted the defeat of this policy and the OAS authorized members to renew relations with the Castro government according to their own views of the benefits to be obtained by such decision. But as of the 1970s it became clear to Washington that if it persisted in trying to maintain that level of isolation, several Latin American countries would simply ignore the agreement. And of course the arrival of new Commonwealth states to the OAS, countries often keenly interested in relations with Havana, was complicating the policy beyond measure.

Thus the United States did not oppose the new flexibility since to do so would have led to embarrassing defections from the camp. And over the next decade virtually all Latin American capitals re-established their diplomatic relations with Havana. Thus ended the extraordinary isolation of the island from its closest cultural, historic, and geographic partners, and while relations with those countries are not always smooth, they have been largely maintained. This chapter, however, deals with the FAR's links rather than those of the state overall. And here isolation is much more real as has been alluded to already and as we see is still largely the case even in the discussion of these first potentially important countries for Cuba's military.

Cuba was expelled from the Inter-American security system entirely. Indeed, even before its formal expulsion it was already being denied access to key meetings and its access to shared defense information dried up long before the more dramatic moves related to expulsion. The Mutual Assistance Pact with the United States was declared void, the U.S. military missions on the island withdrawn, and with the end of its membership of the OAS its Rio Treaty linkage ended too. Its membership of the Inter-American Defence Board became at the same time *lettre morte*.

Cuba managed nonetheless to build a replacement military and defense connection with the Soviet Union over those first years. When that ended some 30 years later and the security system of the Americas remained closed to it, isolation truly set in. Small measures with the countries just discussed could relieve this situation to only a very slight degree. What about the rest of the Americas, however, not only its individual countries but also other regional initiatives of which there have been so many in the recent past? And what about the still communist states of Asia? And where do other relatively important actors outside the Americas stand? The following section will attempt to give an idea of where things stand in answer to these questions.

Colombia and Central America

Colombia provides a very special case. Bogotá has for long been one of the staunchest friends of the United States in the hemisphere. This closeness had been seen in the Korean War where Colombia alone of the Latin American countries sent troops to fight alongside the United States and other U.N. armed forces. It was also there alongside Washington throughout the cold war, both in the Americas and on the international scene, where Colombia supported the United States virtually as a matter of course.

Colombia's history has of course been marked by the most dreadful insurgencies, running from the independence wars right to this day. In the early 1960s a small insurgency was occurring, rather along the lines of a peasant resistance movement to the land seizures taking place at the time. The Castro export of revolution phase arrived in this context and soon most rural peasant groupings had been incorporated into one leftist insurgent group or another, the most important soon becoming the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), with us to this day.⁶² Thus the ideological underpinnings of the Colombian civil war date in large part from Cuban interest in the conflict.⁶³ And while the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) has come to be the most Cuban-influenced of the rebel groupings in that

country, it must be said that in the early days the Castro revolution became the main inspiration, and indeed real support for virtually all the leftist insurgency movements in Colombia.⁶⁴

Given that situation, it is unnecessary to insist that the Colombian government found Cuba's behavior utterly unacceptable. Soon Bogotá broke relations with Havana. And it would be years before they were re-established. It was Cuba's revised behavior that allowed this to happen. Ups and downs continued, however, with relations broken again after Cuba was involved in an arms deal in support of the guerrillas. Years would again pass before relations were restored. But by the end of the 1980s relations were not only restored but also generally normal. And Cuba began to play a more favorable role in efforts to find peace in the country thus becoming over time an important player in the various peace processes launched. Indeed, Cuba with time even joined The Friends of Colombia, a group of states trying to be helpful to the peace process, alongside Western nations of undoubted anticommunist credentials. And Bogotá and other capitals have been fulsome in praise of Cuba's moderating and helpful role with the insurgents and especially with the ELN, so many of whose leaders had at one time or another studied, trained, or found refuge in Cuba in earlier years, and whose admiration for Fidel and the Cuban Revolution could not be doubted.⁶⁵

The Central American states are interesting in that their continued dependence on the United States does seem to color their relations with Cuba to a remarkable degree. They were the last to develop relations due to what was seen as Cuba's unhelpful role in their civil wars, and although this changed in the 1980s and early 1990s to a view that Cuba was really rather more a help than a hindrance in the peace processes of the time, suspicions remained. The significant role of the armed forces in these new democracies also ensured that Cuba was for long viewed warily.

Costa Rica and Guatemala, respectively, the most and least democratic states in Central America, at various times and for differing reasons, have been Cuba's main critics, although El Salvador has not been far behind on many occasions. The Panama dictator Noriega was for a short while a supporter of Fidel but for most of that dictatorship the former had little time for his Cuban homolog.

The Anglophone Caribbean south and east of the Bahamas and Jamaica offers a very interesting case of Cuba's current relations abroad. For here both regional and national initiatives for developing special relations have flourished. At the bilateral level Cuba has found a welcome even in countries where its record is considered spotted. Havana has relations with the whole region, even with Grenada where

Castro made an astoundingly successful state visit two decades after the U.S. invasion of 1983. They will be discussed further as a region below.

Cuban support for Puerto Rican independence from the United States both complicates and makes interesting for some Puerto Ricans the Cuban relationship. There is an office of the Puerto Rican independence movement in Havana's Miramar district. A number of conferences have been held on the subject in Cuba. Some have been academic but some have been clearly political. Cuba made no secret of its position when Puerto Rico voted on the subject in its recent referendum. But Puerto Ricans, who after all share much with Cuba including having been Spain's last colonies in the Americas, are often vaguely charmed by Cuba's interest in them. Little can really be expected of these largely academic and cultural linkages given the U.S. connection, and this is of course unfortunate for Cuba as Puerto Rico has recently become such a major actor on the Caribbean economic scene.

Haiti has benefited enormously from the loan of Cuban doctors to help with the desperate plight of many citizens in that long-suffering country. Cuba also offered such assistance as part of U.N. activities in Haiti but U.S. pressure ensured that there would be no part for Cubans, even on the basis of medical assistance, under the blue U.N. flag.⁶⁶ Haitian medical students have gone on scholarship to Cuba's medical training establishments. The Haitian government is perfectly aware that the United States is not amused by flirtations with Castro but it must be said that this did not prevent President Préval from visiting the island.

Haiti, lying so close to Cuba's most exposed flank where drugs are concerned and manifestly connected closely to the drugs trade, has no security arrangements of any significant kind with Cuba or any relations of great importance to speak of at all. This is of course as a direct result of the influence of the United States whose forces invaded the country in 1995 and established a system ensuring in so far as possible governments ruling in Port-au-Prince that are favorable to Washington. Such governments, whatever their interests, are not in the current context of Cuba-U.S. relations going to run the risk of U.S. anger over close connections with Fidel's government, and in no other sphere is this as true as in the thorny arena of security, although the president has signed some less sensitive accords. And finally, with the shambles of the Haitian national police system at the moment, combined with the abolition of its national armed forces, the United States ensures that the FAR's connections with Haiti have remained very limited indeed.

On the multilateral level, Cuba has also scored some firsts with the Caribbean region. In 1995 it formed with CARICOM a joint commission for the development of relations. However, it must be said that mutual benefits believed to accrue to both from cooperation have been slowed in trade, investment, transportation, technological cooperation, education, culture, environment, and other fields by U.S. pressure on member states to desist from cooperation with the Cubans. Nonetheless, in 2000, Cuba and CARICOM signed a trade and economic cooperation agreement. In October 2001 Cuba was elected to the CARIFORUM. The 1990s also saw Cuba join the Caribbean Tourism Organisation as a full member, as well as the Caribbean Hotel Association and the Caribbean Broadcasting (Radio and Television) Union, and the island was invited as an observer for meetings of the important forum for cooperation and consultation, the Association of Caribbean States (ACES) later on becoming a full member.⁶⁷ Cuba's spectacular successes in tourism development have attracted considerable attention in a group of islands dependent on, but not fully profiting from, their tourism industry. And on the political front, the ACES has felt that to exclude the largest of the islands was simply counterproductive, whatever Washington's views were on the subject.⁶⁸

Havana was soon interested in the Rio Group, the political consultation group developing out of the Contadora process of the early 1980s aiming at finding a local solution to the conflicts in Central America. A first group of countries included only near neighbors of Central America—Mexico, Panama, Colombia, and Venezuela—but they were soon joined by a Contadora Support Group including Argentina, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay. Their work did not prove decisive but it did create space for political negotiations among the actors, states, and armed oppositions, and took the issue away from forums dominated by the United States.

The advantages of such a group for consultation were soon obvious to members and observers alike.⁶⁹ And with time the Rio Group became formalized as a nearly Pan-Latin American discussion group. While the compulsory "liberal democracy" credentials of partners limited the appeal and acceptability of Cuban membership in the group, this did not stop either Cuban interest in the grouping or the latter's interest in developing a Cuban connection.

Less political to some extent the Ibero-American Summit also attracted Cuban interest from its beginnings in the late 1980s and very early 1990s. Again to some extent connected to the difficulties arising for NATO members Spain and Portugal, not to mention Latin American states, from the continuing war in Central America, this

initiative prospered from the start. It aimed to bring together periodically the heads of state or government of the two Iberian nations and those of Latin America in a forum of greater congeniality and cultural connection than most others to which they were parties. The idea was to have leaders to get to know each other, thereby reinforcing democracy and the cultural linkages among them, and identify common interests that could be furthered.

From the beginning Cuba was included in the Summit. And in 1998 Havana was the host for the meeting. Difficulties between Spain and Cuba at the time over human rights hamstrung somewhat the discussions but the meeting was held and Cuba remains a member. Unfortunately, such was the poor state of bilateral relations at the time, the Aznar government being now less than impressed with Castro, that the visit of King Juan Carlos, awaited with much interest in Cuba after the visit in January of the Pope, was essentially only one of attendance at the conference itself. This was a disappointment as it had been hoped that this would be a chance for a real Royal Visit to the only country of the old empire that he had not yet visited.

At the OAS itself there is occasionally a flurry of interest in seeing how Cuba could be brought back into the fold. The increased importance of democratic credentials of a liberal kind over recent years seems, however, to preclude this for the moment. The last sustained interest seemed to be arising when Canada joined the organization in January 1990. At that time there seemed to be the beginning of an informal grouping of states wishing to have Cuba back in and the Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark took the opportunity for moving the Cuba OAS dossier ahead seriously.⁷⁰ The allies at that time appeared to include Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela, as well as Canada and several in the Commonwealth Caribbean, so their importance was not insignificant. The first speech by the new Canadian ambassador to the OAS included a call for the re-admission of Cuba.⁷¹

This "alliance" quickly disappeared, however, as Mexico became fixated on membership of a new North American free trade organization and was not about to annoy the United States on an issue as relatively minor to it as Cuban membership of the OAS. And as the drugs issue came to dominate totally the bilateral U.S.-Colombian agenda, Cuba dropped entirely off Bogotá's multilateral agenda as well. Equally, the nature of the bilateral U.S.-Venezuelan relationship gave little room for a squabble over Cuba in the OAS from which Caracas could only emerge the loser. Finally, even the Caribbean countries wished to avoid a row with the United States when major changes were occurring in the international system at the end of the cold war, and the future of U.S. economic relations with the region was uncertain.

Relations with the Eastern European states other than the Soviet Union went into a downward spiral with *perestroika*, *glasnost*, and the overthrow of the communist system in most of those countries at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. Fidel's criticism of the new governments of these states was often biting indeed and when their support for Cuba, and participation in joint programs ended, this criticism became more bitter still. And while most former Warsaw Pact countries have decided to maintain relations, they are not in any sense close. Nonetheless, some new accords have been signed in recent years as the past has been largely forgotten and common interests have been discovered.

In the case of the new Russia, the breakdown in links was more complex as we have seen in other chapters. Overall, Russia ended this extraordinary and demanding relationship with relief. If the Russian armed forces, or at least the country's intelligence services, did not share this relief they were in a distinct minority as the country felt it could ill afford such luxuries as continuing to support massively Cuba.

As seen, Russia virtually cut all contact except for the Lourdes facility by 1992, and all sense of a special relationship ended. Development projects were especially hard hit and hundreds ceased almost overnight.

With time, however, Cuba and Russia have to some degree found each other again. Despite the severe blow of the closure of Lourdes in 2001, both countries know they can benefit economically from at least some level of trade and wider connection. Both barter and credit-based operations have taken place in energy, spare parts, and food sectors, and they have been on a mutual benefit basis totally unconnected, of course, to any notion of traditional socialist solidarity. This may one day have a defense dimension when Moscow feels U.S. sensitivities have been reduced.

The remaining socialist countries do see some advantages in maintaining reasonably close relations with Cuba. Links with North Korea are few and far between as Pyongyang can offer Cuba little and connections with it might complicate an eventual rapprochement with Washington, and Havana feels the same. But relations with Vietnam and China do not really suffer from such factors.

Cuba has not been overly impressed with what it has seen of liberalizing trends in both these socialist partners. On the other hand Havana appreciates their being there to remind critics that Cuba is not entirely alone as a socialist state in the new world order. And Cuba has found things in the Chinese experience worthy of emulation, one of which being of course Beijing's considerable experience with military approaches to running industries more efficiently.⁷² Fidel's visit to

China and Vietnam in early 2003 sparked many rumors that more of their opening up might be copied by Cuba but these were followed by disappointment.

Relations with Europe represent rather more of a patchwork. Despite a significant unpaid debt owed by Cuba to Spain, and an Aznar government with little sympathy for Castro, the relationship is alive and well. And this has an impact on the rest of Europe's connection with Cuba on the official level. The European Union has been severely critical of Castro on the issue of human rights and has increasingly come into line with Washington on this score. On the other hand the European Union rejected out of hand any pretension on the part of the United States to make either the Torricelli or the Helms-Burton bills apply to companies other than those of the United States. As for Canada this issue has more to do with sovereignty and international business rules than with Cuba *per se*, but as in Canada again, there is a widespread view in Europe that U.S. actions against Cuba tend to be high-handed or actual bullying. Governments in Europe have usually been careful to link criticisms of Castro to others aimed at excesses in U.S. policy toward him. But this is changing as the world power status of the United States evolves and as the desire to be seen to be a good ally with the only superpower becomes more prominent. This is seen in much else other than relations with Cuba, but it is visible here as well, especially since the crucial, in many ways defining, days of the spring of 2003 and the national decisions related to policy toward the Iraq War.

On the other hand, the British government of Tony Blair has recently been more forgiving of Fidel than was that of his predecessor or, of course, Mrs. Thatcher. But the British as well have been firmer on human rights than the Cubans would have liked and have not been helpful to Cuba in the European debate in 2003.

Cuba is rarely very prominent on the radar screen of other European governments. For that reason Spain's view is so important. On the other hand the Nordics have a tradition of sympathy for the Cuban government and people, as do the Italians, which has been reflected in those governments' willingness to give limited assistance to, and cooperate with, Castro, but aid programs are in great trouble, and many have indeed been suspended as a result of the crisis atmosphere.

In Black Africa, Cuba has enormous prestige even to this day. Cuba's assistance with the independence struggles of several African countries is part of their national lore as well as that of Cuba. And Cuba assisted what it felt, often wrongly, were like-minded regimes to hang on to power or even make war on their neighbors. Cuba's role

in Angola, the subject of several books of late, was of a near epic order. Countries affected by Cuba's interest in Africa stretch from the Horn of Africa to Guinea-Bissau and from Algeria to South Africa but it is perhaps in the last of these countries that Cuba's presence has been most visibly and dramatically appreciated. For current governments in South Africa—under the internationally known leader and for many a full-scale hero, Nelson Mandela—have officially given credit to Cuba for having been decisive in helping to bring about a majority-black government in that country. Cuba's military more than held the ring against apartheid South Africa's armed incursions into Angola and the regime's defeat there paved the way, in Mandela's view, to a perception among Black South Africans that the White government was not invincible, and could be beaten. Such a change in perspective was vital for the future of the resistance movement that eventually brought down the former regime and brought a real democracy into Pretoria. In his dramatic 1991 visit to Cuba, Mandela in the face of severe criticism of his trip in the United States, took pains to thank the Cubans. He acknowledged the debt "we have contracted with the Cuban people," asking out loud which country in history could claim more altruism in its policies than the revolutionary island state had shown in Africa.⁷³

In addition, Cuba has sent to Africa tens of thousands of experts, mostly in health, education, and construction, and who worked as far afield as Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ethiopia, São Tome and Príncipe, Tanzania, Congo, and Benin.⁷⁴ And of course many thousands of Africans have studied on the island on Cuban scholarships in any number of fields. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that Cuba's relations with many African countries are excellent. And they have been reinforced by medical assistance programs with many states that, despite the Special Period, are often still in place.

In the Middle East as well, Cuba's independent stand vis-à-vis the United States has won Havana much admiration if only a small number of useful friends. At various times Syria, Iraq, Iran, and even Libya have seen Cuba as an almost natural ally in their struggles with the "Satanic" United States. But such connections have not been very serious nor have they shown much in the way of concrete results. Cuba has sought to have allies in its confrontation with the United States but it knows very well that this confrontation must end through negotiations and not through conflict. And Cuba's difficulties in accepting terrorism as a legitimate means of statecraft also limited the interest in such relations at a variety of times. Finally, it is simply too risky for Cuba to link itself to these countries when they are high on the list of "rogues" for the United States.

Instead the links have remained to a great degree a means for each to prove its lack of isolation. But little more can be expected of them. Cuba has little time for Islamic fundamentalism and certainly, while sympathizing with the Palestinian cause, does not feel as close to that crisis as it does to African issues of emancipation, for example. Cuba welcomes any help it can get in the struggle with the United States but allies who cost more than they bring are less than helpful, and this is especially true since the end of the cold war.

So in the end what does all this add up to in the international realm? Well, it can be argued that it adds up to very little. The difficulty is that Cuba, in the end, may certainly claim to be not nearly as isolated as so many Americans have hoped to show, but that it retains a serious problem absolutely central to its foreign policy objectives. That is, while many countries are willing, even happy, to conduct normal relations with Havana, it has proven impossible or very difficult to make those relations pay off for Cuba in ways truly helpful to the island's people in the present crisis.

This is a central point in the current diplomatic picture for Cuba. The island enjoys all manner of relations with other countries. And while the virtual flood of distinguished visitors to Havana, including a plethora of heads of government and heads of state, has diminished of late compared with the hey-day of 1998, it is still true that they do come. The problem does not lie there. It lies in the inability of the Cuban state to convert this linkage with the rest of the world into real advantages in trade, investment, diplomatic, and other terms.

Cuba has an impressive linkage with Latin America at both bilateral and multilateral levels. But its ability to make that linkage into a profitable trade, investment, or even political collaboration is easy to exaggerate. And while this is less true in the Caribbean, it is also true there. The linkages established serve local elites in the other countries, show independence vis-à-vis the United States, and are popular with certain important electoral sectors. But they are rarely the stuff of which deeply significant international relations of a mutually beneficial kind are made.

The Middle Eastern connection is not one of great profit either despite some elements of common view between Havana and most capitals of that region. Cuba gets precious little from its good relations with Arab countries. Indeed, the key connection in petroleum terms is with Venezuela and it is not repeated elsewhere, and certainly not in the Middle East where U.S. interests are so to the fore in local government calculations.

The African connection is even less impressive when looked at with a hard nose. Many African heads of government or state have visited

Cuba of late and all try to find some sort of agreement to sign with Cuba in terms of cooperation. But when assessed with seriousness these agreements usually bring Cuba precious little. This is not necessarily because of a lack of good will. It is more often because of weakness. Cuba may well be able to offer them something because the successes of the Revolution are so obvious in the educational, cultural, sports, and medical fields. But what can they offer Cuba? That has been the key. Cuba needs so much but these friends are simply not in a position to offer it.

This is also clear from the sort of leader who often visits, not only from Africa but also from other parts of the Third World. Their visits tend to be late in their terms of office, and/or when things are going badly for them at home. It is rare that they come early and when things are going well. Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, for example, visited in July 2002 when he was under an immense cloud as a result of his antidemocratic stance in that country. President Ernesto Samper of Colombia visited at the very end of his presidency and under a different sort of cloud as a result of his electoral campaign linkages with narcotrafficking interests in his nation.

Here again there is little that these other countries can or will offer Cuba. Under the worst circumstances of recent memory in the bilateral U.S.-Colombian relationship, Samper was unlikely to wish to be seen as being too close to Castro. What Colombia could offer might be significant in areas such as access to oil, political influence in Latin American circles such as the Rio Group, and other such initiatives. What it did offer was thanks for help in dealing with the ELN guerrilla grouping in the Colombian domestic conflict and a series of *beaux mots*.

The Caribbean may prove the exception. Here the political linkage alone is invaluable for Cuba. The Grenada visit of Fidel Castro underscored to what extent Cuba's prestige is still high, and for reasons that cannot fail to please the Cuban leadership. Having at least partial allies in the inter-American system among the Commonwealth Caribbean nations, democratic states of great legitimacy, is helpful across the board in a political sense for Cuba. And here these politically positive connections do have an economic and wider linkage. The ACES has real potential from which Cuba has profited and can do so in the future. Caribbean tourism coordination and learning mutually can also benefit Cuba. The wider connections that a region so linked to Europe and Latin America can offer Cuba are considerable.

It is not, however, in multilateral arrangements that the FAR can find solutions to its grave problems. Only states friendly to Cuba, and willing to risk U.S. annoyance, can provide the sort of assistance and connections the Cuban military require.

Some Related Issues

It has been argued that it is the European and Canadian connections, Cuba's links with capitalist developed countries, that has brought the most advantage to Cuba economically and probably politically. In the literature of the far right in Miami, they have "saved" Cuba at a time when otherwise it would have collapsed into its own isolation and misery and would have been finally free after the Cuban people had risen up against their communist overlords. Only European and Canadian perfidy, so this argument goes, has saved the Castro regime and kept Cubans in chains.

In fact, as has been shown more than once in the expert literature, probably the single most important source of economic support for the Castro government in the Special Period has been the "remesas" sent by Cuban Americans (and Cubans in the rest of Latin America, Spain, and elsewhere) to their families and friends as ways to reduce the impact of the difficulties of the current moment. While the U.S. government maintains an embargo of enormous cost to normal Cuban citizens in their everyday life, and does so ostensibly to please Cuban Americans, huge numbers of those same Cuban Americans naturally enough work hard to ensure that their families do not fully face the impact of that embargo.

Even before the damage done to Cuban tourism by the events of September 11, one could see that remittances were becoming more important to the Cuban state than either exports or receipts from tourism. And this situation has merely become clearer since that date. It should first be said that Cuba does not suffer from the same degree of lack of benefits of tourism seen in so much of the Caribbean. As is well known, tourism there is troubled by the fact that the multiplier effect for development of tourism is lessened by the reality that a very large percentage of tourist needs must be met by imports into the countries that host such tourism. Economists state that 75 to 90 percent of tourism income leaves the country again.⁷⁵

In the early days of recent mass tourism in Cuba some of that same situation did temporarily but sharply apply. But such were the exigencies of the Special Period, as well as the resilience of the Cuban people and economy, that the context soon changed. The government moved quickly to provide domestically produced products to fill this growing "internal" market. And now Cuba has plenty of local production to fill needs as diverse as pure bottled water, soft drinks, liquor, foodstuffs, linens, soap and related hygienic products, goods related to entertainment and leisure, and much more. Thus from the troubled early days when Cuba only provided some 11 percent of the

goods and services needed by tourists, the current situation is that the island provides tourists between 65 and 70 percent of their needs from local sources.⁷⁶

Despite this happy situation, it is still remittances that provide most to the Cuban state. Due to the nature of the retail situation on the island, dominated by shops in state hands although this is less the case in agricultural products, virtually all the dollars sent in as remittances are exchanged or used in state exchange kiosks, stores, or other centers. It is thus no exaggeration to say that while Cuban Americans may be behind the "blockade" they are also the key "blockade runners."

This does not mean, however, that remittances have alone saved the day. During the worst days of the Special Period, Cuba sought and found new partners for trade and investment. Those she found were essentially not in Africa or in Latin America, although there were some in the latter, but rather in capitalist Europe and Canada. While the United States was able to isolate Cuba partially on some scores she was not at all able to isolate her completely. Instead, Cuban desperation led to economic reform and a search for new partners in the wake of Soviet collapse that while far from replacing those linkages, helped to ease the crisis at a key moment.

There is little doubt that at this key moment, before remittances had caught on as firmly as they have today, and where the situation was just about as desperate as one could imagine, Europe and Canada were the key to the Revolution's survival and not grudging support from Cuban Americans. The key point here, however, is that it was not, and is not, Cuban connections to the Third World that have been central to its continued existence as an independent state into the twenty-first century. It is rather the country's links with capitalist states whose investment, trade, remittances, and tourism have ensured that Cuba would have a chance, on the economic front, to survive the severe tests of the Special Period.

This emphasizes the other major point to be made here. As mentioned, Cuba is neither entirely isolated by the embargo nor is it anything like immune to its effects. The island is vastly and negatively affected by the embargo especially in its more ferocious recent forms provided by the Torricelli and Helms-Burton initiatives. They may not have been successful in bringing down the Castro government or halting entirely its revolutionary process, but they have succeeded in making all Cubans suffer tremendously in the effort to achieve that political end.

The Castro government has survived because of its own still widely felt legitimacy as part of the Cuban historical experience, as a result of its fulfillment of many basic needs of the population, and of course

also because of the efficiency of its repressive apparatus that discovers, contains, and controls dissent early on and effectively. That dissent is equally de-legitimized for many Cubans because of its continued links with a powerful neighbor whose historic and current role in Cuban history has been to impose its own chosen governments on Cuba instead of truly allowing the Cuban people to choose their own. When all this is combined with the features mentioned, the chances for change are not great. To many Cubans there appears to be no legitimate option other than the current situation. And since Cubans fear violent change, and do not wish to lose the Revolution's achievements, there are powerful forces at work resisting anything that smacks of counterrevolutionary activity.

On the international scene, however, it is those links with capitalist developed countries that remain the centerpiece of recovery schemes for the Special Period. It is as a result of them that Cuba can truly say it has not been successfully isolated by the United States. The issue is with those countries, as with the rest of the world, that of how Cuba can best profit from this connectedness with the international community and effectively use it to reduce the impact of the embargo and recover.

Many Cuban diplomats privately suggest that one of the most important matters at hand has been the degree to which ideology and the old saws of the communist litany have been given such priority within national diplomacy. As mentioned elsewhere, Cuban diplomacy is of a high quality when viewed in professional terms. MINREX can be proud of its diplomats who come from a service as good as any in the hemisphere. Cuba is indeed the only country in the hemisphere of anything like its size to have a truly professional foreign service, the only others to be able to make such a claim being the much larger Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The initial training of Cuban Foreign Service officers, like their refresher and more advanced courses later on in their careers, is given by the Instituto Superior de Relaciones Internacionales in Havana. Senior diplomats with an academic bent as well as academics without direct diplomatic experience staff the Institute, and they clearly do their job very well indeed.

The issue is not in the quality of personnel or in their training or experience. Nor is it in the clarity of choice of objectives or priorities in the general sense. It seems to be, rather, in the often excessive repetition of standard jargon related to the Revolution, to socialism, to imperialism, to globalization and the rest that, whatever their reality in terms of justification, does not seem to assist Cuban diplomats actually to move forward the agendas on which they are working.

Many diplomats from other countries, especially those in multilateral organizations, argue the same, that Cuba's diplomats are of the highest order but that they are often not allowed to go about getting their job done in the most effective manner. Instead they are obliged to go through a series of denunciations of U.S. imperialism, which, whatever the intrinsic merits of the case, tend to lose the battle through repetition and what can be viewed as endless jargon. Real cases of common interests with other countries are thus often missed in the frustrations of ideological denunciations.

Cuba needs to be seen as an effective and useful member of the international community. The argument that it already is and that the fact is being hidden by the United States, as strongly and often convincingly argued by Havana, is really neither here nor there. U.S. policy is often succeeding in painting Cuba as something less than such a helpful member. Cuba's role in arms control, international health especially in Africa, the Colombian civil war, in Central and South American development, and so much more has not even been able to get the country off the list of those aiding or abetting terrorism, despite the obvious nonsense such a suggestion is to anyone with the slightest objective knowledge of the nation. It may be understandable that Cuba's frustrations with the embargo, blockade, terrorism directed over a long period at its leaders and economy, refusals to accept its aid in key areas of the international scene where such aid is needed desperately, and many other issues need airing. But it is still the case that in forums where these facts are well known, and where there may indeed be much sympathy for the Cuban view of things, hopelessly long-winded reminders of the island's problems and their main source can merely bore and tire people while getting them off the actual point being discussed.

This causes frustration in other countries' diplomats even when they may be very sympathetic to elements of the Cuban argument. It may be that continued membership in virtually moribund organizations such as the Group of 77 is not helpful in this regard. And of course, the change in Cuban approaches to Europe and other capitalist powers since 1996 is clear to all observers. Even though Cuba needs trade, investment, remittances, and tourism especially from those countries it sometimes seems to some to nearly take pleasure in inviting poorer relations politically with them. It seems likely that after being forced to reform in the early years of the Special Period, and seeing the success in staving off disasters that those reforms achieved, Havana now feels it can afford to be more hard-line where dealing with those states is concerned. This may well reflect the feeling that the worst is past and that one can return to more "pure" approaches

to the capitalists with whom, after all, one only rather fully cooperated at the time because one was obliged to, not because one was ever convinced that it was the proper thing to do. The impact of this sort of thinking on the FAR can only be negative in the extreme over the long term.

The Crisis of the Dissidents, 2003

In the spring of 2003, 75 Cuban dissidents were arrested in the wake of what Havana viewed as extraordinarily provocative behavior on the part of the head of the U.S. Interests Section in Cuba over the previous months. In addition three hijackers who had used violence in seizing a launch in order to flee the island were executed by firing squad. International outrage was immediate and impressive especially considering the danger and then reality of war in Iraq. The Cuban dissident events provoked a major negative reaction in Europe. European embassies began to openly receive dissidents at diplomatic functions. Most troubling were the facts that the trials of the dissidents were not public, the sentences seemed unduly harsh, and several of the dissidents arrested had by all nongovernment accounts not been working with the Americans and indeed were more than willing to work within the prevailing system in Cuba in order to effect reform. Thousands of pro-Cuban academics, church people, journalists, politicians, union members, and persons from other walks of life gave up on supporting the Cuban Revolution and widespread revulsion at the regime's human rights record reached what may have been an all-time high.

MINREX's answers to the European social invitations were that such action would mean Cuban diplomats would not be attending such events. European government statements on Cuba reached a level of criticism not seen since the shooting down of the two civilian aircraft in February 1996 and in some cases not even then. A large number of cooperative programs went by the wayside and discussions of Cuba and the European Union building a more special economic link evaporated once again. Even members of the European Union traditionally more willing to see Cuba's point of view followed the common policy in general if not to the letter.

Canada and some Latin American countries were unwilling to go as far as the European Union. But Ottawa made crystal clear its disappointment with what it saw as excesses in the Cuban government's handling of the dissident issue, particularly what Canada viewed as the needless harshness of its behavior and in its not being willing even to hold open trials for those accused, its actions against people who were

in no way using violence to challenge the state, the severity of the sentences meted out, and perhaps especially the inclusion of persons known as moderates from the dissident movements' members among those singled out for prosecution. In light of the improvement in relations going on between Havana and Ottawa since the low mark of 1998-1999 there was great disappointment in the latter capital and it became impossible for Canada to work as closely with the Cubans as recently hoped.

Latin American countries at this time have proven quite willing to criticize firmly the Cuban record on democracy and human rights. Much of the reticence of previous years receded although Argentina refused to criticize Havana suggesting that its decision was taken on the basis that Cuba was under siege and had to adopt drastic measures for its own defense in the face of U.S. intransigence.

It is too soon to know how long the cool period in European and to some extent Canadian and Latin American relations with Cuba will continue. Fidel's visits to Latin American capitals of late have had something of the triumphal royal progress about them, and local governments are loath to cross swords with a historic figure of the appeal of the elder Castro. Canada's relationship with Cuba, like Spain's and Mexico's, is so multifaceted that even when the political side of it is in trouble, things on the tourism, trade, investment, people-to-people, sports, cultural, and other fronts seem to just carry on. But the result of the crisis has doubtless been a downturn in international connections the Cuban government can perhaps afford but for which it is nonetheless paying a significant price. And the FAR must be seen as being at the forefront of those elements of the Cuban state losing out.

Conclusions

One is tempted, at the end of this lengthy look at real and potential military links between the FAR and the forces of other, largely noncommunist, states to suggest that the present state of those linkages is extremely weak and hardly represents real options the FAR can exploit in a serious way. Just as important, future possible links, while there, are also almost entirely limited to "soft security" matters such as drugs, illegal immigration, natural disasters, and the like rather than the central national defense concerns that tend to be considered issues of earlier years but that in the context of recent trends in U.S. policy, and the violent anti-Cuban rhetoric that has accompanied them, may well be with us again.

The FAR has been wrenched away from its main connections with the outside world. And if there has been some improvement in links

with China and Vietnam, this in no way makes up for the shattering impact of the end of links with the then Warsaw Pact states and especially the Soviet Union. The lack of funds precludes more joint activities even with those neighbors and others who might be tempted by some further defense links. This state of affairs merely aggravates a usually negative situation whose basic reasons for applying extend far beyond the merely financial to include those we have seen in the political, ideological, economic, and other fields.

Chapter 7

The Context for the FAR at Home—*Malaise sans fin?*

As this is written in 2005, it is clear that Cuban defense is enormously changed since the beginning of the Special Period more than 15 years ago now. In order to get closer to a position in which we can draw conclusions on such a relatively closed institution as the FAR involves us looking at a number of points related to the context actually lived by Cubans. It will become obvious to the reader that these matters are close indeed to the strategic issues we are discussing in this book even if they do not necessarily seem so at first glance.

From the FAR's point of view, paradoxical as it may at first appear, the Special Period has been marked by a number of positive elements. It is in no small measure due to the human and material resources, the resourcefulness, the capacity for organization and adaptation to change, and the confidence of the Cuban government and people in their armed forces that Cuba has been able to survive the Special Period and hang on against seemingly hopeless odds.

The Cuban strategic picture today is grim but seemingly not desperate. Over a dozen years ago it was the latter. At that time, Andrés Oppenheimer could write his *Castro's Final Hour* and few found the title ridiculous or dared to say so. The main props for Cuba's economic and social system simply disappeared and the same could also be said for its defense and political structures. Over 15 years later, the scene is hardly rosy. Indeed, it is still very bad, but it no longer seems hopeless. Since the mid-1990s there has been a relatively steady if slowing recovery of the economy. In the defense context, the armed forces are greatly weakened but it is too much to say that they are a mere "shadow of their former selves."¹ Politically, while communism at least as we knew it does indeed seem dead, Cuba is not entirely alone in keeping many elements of its structures while jettisoning others.

The Economy

All economic indicators plummeted between 1990 and 1993 in every sense of the word. Today's Cuban economy is still small, vulnerable, seemingly divided in purpose, and "planned" in some ways but terribly unplanned and complex in reality. It has certainly improved with the recovery alluded to above; however, it had a frightfully long way to go from when it touched bottom in the mid-1990s and subsequent "growth" statistics should be read with that caveat in mind.

The relatively dynamic sectors of the Cuban economy remain tourism, biotechnology, communications, and little else. Tourism had faltered if by no means failed but had then recovered despite the results of the impact of international terrorism in its recent forms. While it is true that Cuba's extraordinary reputation for safety has helped in this recovery, things are far from good. As many specialists have pointed out, the economy is too dependent on external connections that are far from stable and even farther from Cuban control. Indeed, Cuba is dependent on "remesas," sent by former members of its population living abroad, and on tourism, to a frightening extent. And while this is hardly unique to the island it is worrying, especially in light of its central role in financing the state and indeed society.

Thus vulnerabilities are massive. And it does not help Cuba much to know that there are other countries in the Caribbean and Central America in the same boat. Recovery has likewise been slowed by government policies that are half-hearted since, of course, the Cuban state did not choose to reform the economy: it was *forced* to do so. Socialism has not been abandoned as an objective and reforms too often seen as compromising with capitalism are also viewed by the state and its leaders as merely a necessity for the survival of the revolutionary experiment, and not as an objective to be sought after as the proper path to follow for the nation's economic future.

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that reform has not been as complete as many hoped. And this is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. But there is more food being produced and more varieties of it. Markets are available for most food products if one can afford them but access is through a complicated series of state and private arrangements, the latter of which see prices high and remaining so despite government efforts. Sugar has nearly collapsed in terms of its production and trends are not good. But at least in the case of sugar this follows to some degree the objectives of government. That is, Havana has decided to diversify in the midst of the current crisis and is closing dozens of *centrales* and retraining their workers for transfers to other fields of activity. But of course this is all costly and

time consuming. On the other hand, citrus production is up impressively, and limited experiments in fields as diverse as wine and flower production are advancing.

The mining sector, after a very good start earlier in the period, slowed in terms of growth and then picked up again. Prices for mineral products have not been consistently good but some have recovered well from the days of the Asian recession. There is more productive capacity to develop here but it is far from certain that foreign investors will find the sector as attractive in the future as they once did.

Having said all this, this is no longer the mid-1990s. Tourism, hard hit in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, had by mid-2003 almost completely recovered, something very few countries could say.² There is much more money in circulation. Somewhere between 50 and 60 percent of the population apparently has some sort of access to dollars, essential to a decent standard of living on the island today, and there is clearly some recovery at the popular level. There are many more cars on the road, much more cultural and social life visible, and everything from medical supplies to electric appliances is more available.³ Thus there is hope that change, while dreadfully slow, is coming and that the current trend will continue. But it is also important to understand that many of the poor do not necessarily share this hope and feel that there is no way out of what they are obliged to see as the continuing or even permanent economic crisis.

Politics

There is even more uncertainty over the political situation. The generation gap is getting wider, especially in the major cities, as the older generation leaves active life and a much more cynical and long-suffering younger generation moves forward to, at least in theory, take its place. The speed of change in the political realm has been slow indeed. The fear of a loss of control of any reform process, as occurred in Eastern Europe, is ever present. Fidel Castro is determined to retain power and hand it over to people of his choosing. He is equally determined that the successes of the Revolution will not be undermined. And he believes those to be, beyond the obvious ones of health care, education, the arts, sports for all, progress with racial and gender equality, and the rest, one of central importance: national independence.

Whatever one can say about the impact of the Special Period, it is clear that national independence has been maintained as a sacred and inviolable principle of life under the Castro regime. Castro set out

to achieve two things: deep political, economic, and social reform, and full national independence. This was a reaction to the political, economic, and social mess of the 1950s, and the humiliation he felt so keenly at being a citizen of a mere “banana republic.” No one in his or her wildest dreams would accuse Cuba of being a banana republic now. This is not to say that there are not many, especially among the young, who would readily exchange their independence for banana republic status if that were to mean greater well-being. But it most assuredly is to assert that the Martian dream related to real independence has been achieved.

Even in the worst days of the Soviet connection, Cuba showed remarkable independence of action. The Soviet “alliance” was fraught with problems for the Soviets given the independent mind of Fidel Castro and his insistence on putting Cuban interests before those of others in his foreign policy. Havana did do Moscow’s bidding frequently. The relationship was far too asymmetrical for that not to happen. But Cuba did not do the USSR’s dirty work unless it felt that the benefits were greater than those from not taking part in Soviet-led activity.⁴ It was, however, usually the Cubans who did the leading. In Africa, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America, over the three decades of the partnership, Havana was able to carve out exceptional independence vis-à-vis Moscow for its own policies.

In the face of the traditional master, Cuban independence could not have been more visible. While Havana sought closer relations with the United States on any number of occasions, and while it wanted desperately to end the embargo, it was not prepared to deal with Washington on any basis other than sovereign equality and mutual respect. The legitimacy that the Castro government has obtained through this extraordinary series of successes—domestic reform aiming at the most humble classes and national pride and independence after decades of humiliation—has been exceptional and is the key explanation, in the view of this analyst, as to why the government is still in power many years after the end of communism in Eastern Europe. No Soviet bayonets helped to bring Castro to power. No Soviet political tutelage sustained him there. In terms of his eventual place in history, he is a *Cuban* answer, however unacceptable to many, to a *Cuban* problem.

Cubans are often immensely proud of this story. But such is the struggle for a decent life in Cuba today that there are many, especially the young, who are simply not interested in the story. They want prosperity, a chance to travel, real roads to personal fulfillment, and an easier life, and they want these things *now*. The system has not proved able to provide *any* of these desires and has as a result forfeited the

loyalty of vast numbers of young people, and many older ones as well. This is the challenge for Fidel Castro. His charisma remains astounding as virtually all who meet him point out. He is a truly "historic leader." But younger Cubans, while usually charmed by him, often do not want a historic leader. They want a "current" leader, one who can end the frightful conditions they face and give them a brighter future.

Thus a long-standing dictatorship, with a remarkable record of successes in answering deeply felt needs of the bulk of the population, is now no longer able to convince a huge and vital percentage of the population that it can still "deliver the goods." The younger generation has hardly known anything but the Special Period. After 15 years, it is tired of sacrifice and hardship. When the older generation speaks of the "good old days," the young search for such times in their memories and often simply do not find them.

Gone are the paid holidays in proper surroundings, crowning achievement of a social system that had brought Cubans something undreamed of before 1959. Gone is the decent housing, or the perception of such, that was such a feat of the reforms of the 1960s. Gone is much of the excellence of the medical system because of lack of drugs and other resources. Gone is much of the infrastructure of a superb and free educational system truly awarding excellence even if excessively politicized. And damaged is a still thriving arts scene dependent on a supportive state. Under such circumstances the young, not surprisingly, are less than impressed. They listen to their elders and are often even convinced that the Revolution brought many good things. But they are rarely left with a belief that it still can.

From the outside, many observers come away speechless with admiration for a system that, even now, gives so much. The rationing system, while pitiful when compared with better days, is still there and vital for the survival of millions. Public services, while often in dreadful shape, are usually still delivered in some form or other. Housing is often very poor but it is also there. Fidel's boast that no school or hospital would close as a result of the crisis has proven true. Indeed, there are more of them today than in 1990, and while much medicine is not available free of cost, what there is most assuredly is made available. The situation in the arts, currently hopelessly underfunded, is nonetheless vibrant and magnificent to observe. Day care services would make citizens from most richer countries pause to admire. The progress made in the field of racial equality over the last 45 years would bring credit to achievements one might hope to make over centuries. The same can in large part be said of women's rights as well. From the inside, however, it is much more difficult to carry away a

positive picture. Life is simply too dreary, too harsh, too without hope for a way out soon, to lead to optimism, especially among the young.

This political picture would be daunting to any government. But a government that, while trying hard to rejuvenate, has difficulty being convincing in its efforts has an even harder time with it. Socialism's demise almost everywhere in the world has not been as decisive as critics of the Castro experiment suggested. But the expression "China" in Cuba means "far away" or "remote" in every sense, and Vietnam has no real presence in the Cuban "weltanschauung." For the Cuban people they seem to stand alone in keeping up a system that the rest of the world has discarded as idealistic, wonderful in its aspirations and hopes for the betterment of man but hopelessly out of date and out of touch with the real world. This depressing assessment is especially true of the youth. And it is from the young that the FAR must draw its strength.

State propaganda is often seen as a joke and a particularly unpleasant one. Cuban humor has a tradition for being caustic and highly political. The call for sacrifice, continued devotion to revolutionary ideals, patriotism, the giving of oneself for the community, and the like can fall on very deaf ears indeed when so much functions badly and when perceptions of the present, but especially of the future, are so pessimistic. The claims that one enjoys high standards of social equality, housing for all, proper treatment of women, justice, and so much more, while in part doubtless justified, again sound hollow in the current climate of suffering.

The young in Havana are especially unimpressed with the police who seem to be omnipresent and ridiculous. Recruited too rapidly in the early years of the tourism boom, they are almost always from the less developed East, and often lack the education necessary for handling a sophisticated urban populace. However, it is they, alongside the famous solidarity of the average Cuban, who provide the security for which Cuba is so well known. For this is the safest country (and capital city) in Latin America and if since the Special Period pilfering is rampant, serious violent crime is still almost unknown. This is no mean achievement and the Cuban population as a whole benefits from this situation far more than it is actually aware.

Outside of Havana, the police (and MININT) presence is vastly reduced except for areas bordering tourist hotel zones where again they are highly visible and active. In rural areas, and in smaller towns, they are usually respected and liked, marking an extraordinary difference between public perceptions of the police among the various parts of the island. In addition, the annoying and endless identification checks made by the police (in order to reduce prostitution, molesting

of tourists, and illegal sales and services) strike obviously at the young more than older segments of the population. This also leads to startling differences in perceptions of the once much and universally honored institution of the *Policía Nacional Revolucionaria*.

Thus one can speak of a crisis of the generations but one can also speak, as does the excellent analyst and strategic thinker Rafael Hernández, of a crisis of values.⁵ Cuba is a country that for over 40 years has tried to build a heightened structure of values, based on self-sacrifice, duty, honor, and honesty. Faced with a sustained economic crisis, this system of values is simply cracking. The growth of petty crime is exceptional and even more noticeable since Cubans have for so long been accustomed to low levels of such problems. *Jineterismo*, even if not considered quite so vulgar a form of prostitution as those practiced in most other countries, is nonetheless a visible sign of how young people must go to all lengths to enjoy the meager offerings of the "good life" through access to dollars. Since there is a perception that things are only going to change so slowly that the current generation somehow must be sacrificed, there is an urgency to "live" among many young people that is on occasion truly heart rending. But it is also damaging to the body politic and creates a *sauve qui peut* attitude that fits poorly with the official propaganda of idealism and sacrifice for others. Further, corruption, as mentioned, even if at a lower level than in most other parts of Latin America, can only be considered endemic.⁶

Since the January 5, 1999, speech by Fidel outlining a new crackdown on crime, especially in sectors that could damage Cuba's reputation as a safe place for foreigners to go on holiday, there has been a remarkable clean-up in the cities and especially in Havana. *Jineteros*, while still quite present in a number of areas frequented by tourists, are far less numerous than before and much less daring in their approaches to foreigners. The constant offer from pedestrians and doorways of young women, cigars, private housing, unofficial taxi services, supposedly cheap *paladares* (private restaurants in houses), and occasionally even young men or drugs has been reduced beyond measure even though it has hardly disappeared altogether.

The social dangers of the sort of tourism that these kinds of conditions would attract have now been avoided to a considerable extent. But it took the speech, and the measures announced therein, to have any effect and there is still much to do. Sex tourism abounded until 1999 and seemed to have no end to its development, with especially Italian and Spanish men, and even many women, coming to enjoy the bonanza. This has been addressed impressively and while still a phenomenon one notices is at least not threatening the Cuban way of

life as it did previously. As one might imagine, however, that very success has put even more pressure on urban youth who do not to the same extent have even these informal ways of connecting with the sources of dollars, and amusement, that the tourist offered. Only the much more daring now make these contacts and engage in trying to cater to tourists' wishes; but present conditions still push many to these levels of desperation.

The Resulting Malaise

From the above comes a national malaise that seems at times all pervasive. There is a lack of initiative that often appears to be across the board. A 2003 film, made by producers who normally work in the documentary field, is entirely silent and follows several *habaneros* around the city in their normal daily activities. The lack of hope shown therein is truly frightening and almost all who have seen the film agree on its astounding and troubling accuracy.

The excellent if small Cuban film industry, a success in its own right and something of which the Revolution is aptly proud, abounds today with depressing, if highly humorous at times, treatments of daily life on the island. Recent impressive films have dealt with emigration (*Miel para Ochún*—Honey for Ochún, an African god worshipped as part of Cuban santería), housing (*La Permuta*—the move), tourism (*La Vida es silbar*—life is whistling, and *Hacerse el sueco*—act like a Swede), bureaucracy (*Guantánamera*—the woman from Guantánamo, and *Lista de espera*—the waiting list), homosexuality (*Fresa y chocolate*—strawberry and chocolate), and many other issues facing Cubans. Despite their humor they show a society deeply damaged by the Special Period or the years just before it, one with little faith in the promises of the past and even less in a happy future for the nation.

Theater as well shows this lack of faith. Behind the impressive humor of much theatrical Cuban output at the moment again seems to lie deep pessimism. Cubans flock to plays, new and old, such as Héctor Quintero's *Sábado Corto* (half-workday Saturday dealing with current conditions) and *El Lugar ideal* (the ideal place, dealing with a Cuban family's sacrifices to set up a small apartment to rent to foreigners for dollars), Julio Cid's *Cabaiguán-Habana-Madrid* or A. de Casso's *Viernes en el Hotel Luna Caribe* (Friday in the Hotel Caribbean Moon, about dreams of moving to Spain), and *Un Español en La Habana* (about locals taking advantage of tourists). And while most deal with these issues with humor rather than the more jarring seriousness one could well imagine on such themes, the message is never lost.

Television is more controlled but humorous programs still get in some jibes at the system. The impact of the Special Period is so great and complete that no program portraying contemporary Cuba can escape seeming criticisms of the way things are. Police crime programs show streets with Cuba's infamous "baches" (great holes in the asphalt, usually there for years and years with no effort to repair them), and while the ubiquitous Latin American love of the "novela" (soap operas) is nowhere more powerful than in Cuba, and with production of this genre on the island quite impressive, more signs of reality have to creep in. Art thus mirrors life although softening usually what is for the average Cuban much worse. Cubans laugh at themselves and their lot but most of the time it can prove to be anything but a laughing matter. And thus the malaise is a real one.

The government's unwillingness to issue more licenses for bicitaxis (bicycle taxis), food kiosks, *paladares*, private homes catering to tourists, and many other activities legalized under the *cuentapropismo* (self-employment) reforms of the early 1990s but still carefully controlled and heavily taxed, stymies initiative in the name of not creating classes in the society. And while perhaps laudable in some ways, what this means is that the creation of these classes is instead based on access or lack thereof to *divisa* (hard currency). This has been referred to earlier but it is important here to recognize the degree to which this crushes individual, family, and, to some extent, even collective energy in the country.

Cubans still hang on but in the Special Period even their greetings have changed. To the traditional greetings of "¿cómo andas?" or "¿qué tal?" or "¿cómo estás?" asking someone how he or she is doing, the now common replies are "aguantando" (hanging on), "en la lucha" (in the battle), "luchando" (struggling on), and the like. This is not militarization. This is an accurate reflection of life as it is currently lived. This frustration does not often find a place in dissident movements. Cuba is not like that.⁷ Instead, it finds its place in lethargy, lack of initiative, and a depressing rejection of effort especially in the educational field as faith has been lost in the possibility of finding properly paid employment in one's area of specialization.

The question is a daily one as parents often have to plead with their children, especially their most promising ones, to stay in school or university (or even technical college) and finish their preparation for a profession or trade. But what can they answer when these young people can say with truth that by selling two boxes of cigars illegally each month to tourists, they can earn more than a doctor, professor, nurse, lawyer, or anyone else in the pay of the state (except for the police) earns in a month? Thus the educational system, pillar and

pride of the Revolution, can itself become a point of derision among the young.⁸

This raises the central point of that malaise in many senses, which is that the gap between income in normal walks of life and the price of decent living is enormous and in most cases must be filled by money from abroad or by illegal activities at home, or indeed by both. This is central to Cuban life and explains the pilfering crisis, much of the corruption crisis, and a great deal of the malaise in a society that until recently had high ideals of the perfection of man.

In a way Cubans today suffer from their successes. The Revolution has produced a greatly improved society in many ways. Until 1989, people were accustomed to a good ration system, regular and paid long holidays, excellent educational facilities, an impressive medical system, a vast gambit of cultural and sports events virtually free, and a long list of other advantages.⁹ In Latin American terms, the Revolution had indeed answered many of the basic and most dramatic needs of the masses. The cost, as is well known, was high in terms of dictatorial methods and links with the Soviet Union, but the rewards were there for all to see. But that new citizen, well educated and healthy, accustomed to benefit from these *logros* (achievements) of the Revolution, finds they are no longer there, or are often near collapse. Instead of working to improve things for the *patria* and society, he or she is in a desperate and often illegal struggle to survive. This is soul destroying and often most so for young people raised with the very ideals the Revolution most trumpets.

One does not wish to be overly dramatic here but as mentioned earlier, even 46 years after the Revolution's "triumph," the average Cuban looks north for his comparisons. This was changing before the Special Period although before 1959 it was the norm. It is also true that European, Latin American, and Canadian tourism has meant that the only model is in a sense not the United States. But that is quibbling. Essentially the model is indeed the United States, center for television programs and cinema, modes of dress and comportment, base for the production of most modern music, major center for the *lingua franca* of the world, and master of the world. Young Cubans even flaunt t-shirts with U.S. flags, as if taunting the government to repress their use, in the midst of embargoes and the Special Period. And the latest fashion coming from the United States will *ipso facto* dominate the dress and thinking of the young faster than one would think possible in a supposedly closed system.

The result is that for many Cubans *everything* is wrong. And there is no hope of changing it without the death of Fidel and the utter destruction of the system in place at the moment. Yet they will then

go on to say that civil war is a real danger because so many people still do believe in the system and would defend it energetically. Thus one must have a peaceful transition. But it must also be a rapid one in order to please them. It is a quicksand of expectations and half-truths that holds out little hope.

Everything is of course not wrong. The educational system is suffering but it is still very impressive indeed. No other country in Latin America can boast anything like it for the masses. The medical system is in trouble with dilapidated hospitals, old equipment, staff themselves often suffering from the general malaise, some corruption in terms of access, many staff doing other jobs that pay better, excessive bureaucracy, and a host of other problems. But where else in the Third World could one claim to have absolutely generalized access to medical assistance in the midst of national crisis, or the multitude of other advantages Cubans enjoy?

Cultural life is thriving if not without difficulties. And the Pan American Games of 2003 in Santo Domingo have again proven that Cuban athletic prowess is still on the rise despite a lack of sports equipment, travel funds, transport, uniforms, and virtually everything thought of as "necessary" for successful sports success.

The cities of Cuba are safe and its people do not worry excessively about security issues. There are no walled forts as homes of the rich, no bodyguards or private security elements for the wealthy, no nervous movements at night as one goes home from the evening's activities. The great crises of life that ruin the poor in other countries are still usually addressed by the Cuban state and not a cause for undue concern for Cubans. There is little worry that an accident or illness will ruin an individual or a family. The same is true of a funeral, the state taking care of these costs as well. Travel is massively subsidized although transport is still a national disaster. There is no need to save for one's children's university fees.

Thus it is far from true to say that everything is wrong. To this day, and in the midst of the Special Period, students and visitors from Latin America are often struck with how well Cubans manage. If the average Cuban were to look east to Haiti, west to rural Yucatán, or south to Jamaica, he or she might find that life does not look so bad after all. But the point for our study is that he or she *does not* look in these directions. It is to the north that Cubans look and they cannot help but be disappointed if they compare their lot with what they know, or think they know, about the "norte," "Yuma," "allá," or the many other names they have for the great and prosperous country to their north.

Cubans, and especially the Cuban youth from which soldiers, sailors, and airmen come, therefore arrive in uniform often little

impressed with their lot. Indeed, they are often not even interested in a major effort to change it. Instead, they tend to look to illegal activities, emigration, or just sloth as easy ways out of their predicament in one form or another. This malaise must surely be addressed because the effect on defense of the country is not indirect here. It could end up by being very direct indeed.

Chapter 8

The FAR and the Politics of “No Transition”: But Who Else?

The official position of the Cuban government is that there will be no transition, and thus there will not be any “transition government” either. This is not to say that Cuban officials do not understand that Fidel will in fact die or be incapacitated at some time in the future. Despite dozens of jokes to the contrary, Fidel of course will die and someone will take his place at the helm of the Cuban state. This is well understood by Cuban officials even if they very rarely think of this matter in terms of anything approaching immediacy even in 2005, the year of his seventy-ninth birthday.¹

There will of course be a government of transition from one under Fidel’s leadership to one that is not. What Cubans take pains to point out, usually rather with annoyance, is that this government will not be one of transition in terms of moving from one system to another. That is, the argument goes, Cuba will remain a socialist state, one with the achievements of the Revolution firmly in place, and one where the “battle of ideas” continues into the future even if under other leadership.

Raúl Castro was named early on after the Revolution’s victory as second-in-command and heir to Fidel. Not only was he to be head of the armed forces but he was also named first vice president of both the Council of State and the Council of Ministers, as well as second secretary of the Party, a unique post in the communist world. Finally, the rank of General of the Army was invented for him and formally granted shortly afterward. Indeed, Fidel at the time said that the succession had been so fully ensured by these moves that he could himself retire without interrupting the essential processes of the Revolution.² Blood is of course thicker than water and Fidel, with his exceptional understanding of politics and armies, ensured that his brother had full

control over the FAR. Indeed, Raúl's hold has been reinforced in recent years in dramatic ways such as through the Ochoa affair but also in a more quiet manner through shifts in key personnel and in more public exposure.³

Raúl has been head of the military establishment for an exceptionally long time. If it is true that Fidel's record in the presidency is virtually unmatched worldwide at this time, his brother's term as minister of defense and army commander is at least as remarkable in terms of time in position. In the autumn of 2004, he celebrated 45 years as the holder of these appointments, a record of simply astounding length.

Needless to say, this time has been spent in part ensuring that his command is unquestioned. He has for long placed only those loyal to him in positions of power. But this practice has been heightened of late in the light of the increased potential for corruption, and as a result of normal increased questions of effective control in the light of the length and severity of the Special Period. The "cúpula" is now truly Raulista and not merely Fidelista although one should be at pains to point out that there is no contradiction whatsoever between being one and being the other at one and the same time. Raúl has shown no interest in outshining his elder brother at any time in their political partnership going back half a century. There is no reason to think that this is likely to change in the near future unless Fidel were incapacitated.

This state of affairs is of course more true for the FAR than for the Cuban state as a whole. Raúl is much better known in the armed forces and in MININT than he is outside these security forces. His reputation as humorless and uncharismatic is nearly universally accepted in the country despite the generalized view in the armed forces that he is charming, intelligent, has a very good sense of humor, and is a natural leader.⁴ In addition, Raúl is known in the FAR for his fairness, hard work, energy, example, and his caring for those people under him.⁵ In military organizations these are high compliments indeed, and it must be said that it is likely that he has more of the leader in him than is generally granted outside military circles.⁶

Be that as it may, it is to Raúl that power will in all likelihood be transferred in the case of the death or incapacitation of the *máximo líder*. The country expects this to happen and the security forces take it as a given. No one seems to spend much time thinking about it, however.⁷ In general, among Cuban officials, and indeed among most observers, Fidel seems, rather like Francisco Franco in the Spain of his day, somehow permanent.

There is no voiced disapproval or disappointment with the presumed successor. While Fidel has reiterated in recent years that

Raúl is still, indeed, the chosen man, there was little controversy on this issue even before. The reason for even feeling that one had to repeat the fact was probably that the arrival of younger people such as Roberto Robaina and Carlos Lage into the presidential circle at the beginning of the Special Period gave some analysts the idea that Fidel was looking for a truly new second level of leadership for the Revolution.

These analysts were proven wrong as Raúl's retention as heir apparent was reiterated in both official and unofficial statements at all levels of government. The shattering demolition of Robaina by stages over recent years has merely reinforced the impression that the current leadership is still quite confident in its own ability to carry on for a good while longer. This does not mean that the lower levels of the Party and State have not been rejuvenated.⁸ That process has been occurring for at least a couple of decades now. And even though the younger leadership receives very wide criticism in Cuba, as it did especially during the Elián incident, there are doubtless many young leaders in the wings with undoubted capability and drive.

But Are the Cuban Armed Forces "Latin American"?

In this chapter, we suggest that the FAR are likely to have a central role in whatever kind of transition takes place. The role of the FAR during any period of uncertainty following the incapacitation or death of Fidel Castro is one which is of course not at all out of place in Latin American political and military history. Indeed, it is fair to say that it is a typical Latin American role for the military: holding the ring while politicians struggle to find a way out of a sustained political or economic crisis, ensuring stability while change is undertaken, providing a guarantee to all that things will in the end somehow come out all right and that a slip into chaos is not going to be countenanced by the security forces of the state.

In recent years, we have seen such events and roles for the armed forces in Ecuador and in Guatemala, to name just two, but if we were to look back merely at the last half century of Latin American history, we would notice roles of this kind, or similar to them, in most Central American countries, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, and even in more democratic Colombia. And it could be argued that roles not very distant from these were played by the armed forces in other Latin American countries over those years as well.

But if this is a role the FAR are likely to inherit in Cuba as well, we must ask if the Cuban armed forces can still be considered

"Latin American" in this sense? After all, such has been the nature of the history of Latin America since independence that the armed forces have virtually been forced to become the sort of political arbiter that we have seen so often and so sadly in that region. Are the FAR up to this sort of task or any longer even the sort of organization likely to undertake the role?

The features of note that mark what are generally considered to be the characteristics of a Latin American force are many. But it behooves us to remember that Latin America has 20 countries, as Marcel Niedergang reminds us, and 20 very different societies.⁹ It is just as true as well that the armed forces of Latin American countries have a very diverse set of histories, differing models in many cases coming from Europe or North America on which they base themselves, and varied approaches to major issues such as national development, democracy, civil-military relations, the reformist Left, and much else.

It would thus take a brave analyst to try to find a model for Latin American armed forces. Having said this, there are some features of Latin American forces that are sufficiently common to most that they have come to be accepted as regional norms. And it is to these we should turn in order to judge whether the Cuban military fit into some kind of regional mold, however faulty and inaccurate, and thus improve our ability to judge their capacity to play a central role in any transition.

Latin American armed forces are generally agreed to be, in the majority of cases, the result of a history of conflict and largely illegitimate government and fractured society, which has resulted in their becoming the arbiters of national politics and a consistently offered alternate government to those provided by national oligarchies, political parties, or revolutionary movements. As in many cases the founders of their states in the wake of the aftermath of the wars against Spain (this of course does not apply to Brazil's peaceful transition to independence under the monarchy), the armed forces represent, at least to themselves but often to much of their nation's public opinion as well, legitimacy as the very embodiment of the state and the nation.¹⁰

Often these armed forces went on to decide the boundaries of the state, were instrumental in providing a means of "nationalizing" the citizens of the state (often through obligatory national service), occupied the state's interior, and held the ring for the politicians in order to ensure that political infighting among groups with their own interests at heart did not do intolerable damage to the nation. They thus stood above politics, at least in their own self-perception, and represented all that was best and most permanent in the state. This is at least how the military mind in Latin America has seen the evolution

of the region, and of the military institutions of the region, over the nearly two centuries since independence.¹¹

This state of affairs, in play for such a long time, meant that the armed forces came to see themselves, and often be seen, as the saviors of the state and the only permanent element of it. This has been combined, as in much of the Third World, with several key advantages the armed forces have, which no other element of the state apparatus can boast of or indeed any other part of the nation. Latin American states are in general weak. Thus, when armed forces have a list of advantages such as given below it is hardly surprising to see them dominate government so often specifically and society in general often enough. The list of advantages would include:

- nearly ubiquitous status throughout the national territory
- hierarchical order
- command structure accepted by all as necessary and legitimate
- disciplined and admiring of discipline
- constantly updated leadership and technical capabilities
- preference for planning and training in it
- system of training on a constant basis throughout careers
- flexible
- generally fit
- vast range of capabilities within the organization
- mobile
- *armed*, and
- *available*.

In a way it is a wonder that armed forces do not have more power, rather than less, in Latin American nations. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, Talleyrand was perhaps understating things when he said, "Vous pouvez tout faire avec la baïonnette sauf s'asseoir dessus."¹² It does appear that history, especially Latin American history, shows us that a government or system supported by the armed forces can often "sit" on the bayonet for quite some time before its pricking becomes intolerable.

In this light even those civilian politicians with the best possible democratic credentials find themselves calling on the armed forces in recent times to do all manner of work that, it is generally felt, should typically in a democracy be handed over to civilian elements of the state apparatus.¹³ I refer to the vast range of nontraditional jobs being given to the military in Latin America today such as:

- crop protection
- anti-kidnapping duties
- police replacement or reinforcement in large cities

- police training in cities
- postelection clean-up campaigns
- safe handling of street urchins
- customs service takeovers
- prison service takeovers
- airport control duties
- ecological patrols and forestry protection
- private security duties, and
- medical duties in support of rural populations.¹⁴

As a number of Latin American societies have recently gone through hard times, and civilian and democratic governments have been obliged to respond to urgent situations, they have found that the availability, flexibility, mobility, discipline, and *armed* status of the forces have meant that they alone could answer the challenge. This was far from meaning that they were the best option for the matter at hand. Nor does it mean that their choice was the one wished for by decision makers. However, the combination of their capabilities and availability, added to the absence of other options, made the choice an obvious if not a comfortable one.

The forces are of course frequently not overly pleased with these taskings, many of which are not prone to an easy exit after initial involvement, some of which have highly corrupting tendencies attached to them, and others of which are all but thankless. But they can hardly refuse the call of a legitimately elected civilian government especially when major questions of national cohesion are in play.

The whole context here is one of the heavy weight of history. Weak states have been the Latin American norm since immediately after independence, arguably even before it. And their military forces soon showed their centrality to the political process. In most countries the process was not simple and the military retained power, first as elements backing regional *caudillos* contending for power at the center, and then more recently as military institutions per se, organizations and leaders with their own program of government and the intention to stay in power to put it into place.¹⁵

When the latest wave of democratization began in the late 1970s, circumstances improved enormously and never did things look so bright for putting the armed forces firmly back in the barracks. But as witnessed by the long list of urgent new roles, some of which have been accorded them in most countries in the region, such optimism has proved largely if not entirely unfounded.

Other military traditions and conditions that have come to be termed typically "Latin American" by academics and the general

public at large have included:

- a tendency to exaggerated numbers of high-ranking officers when compared with the bulk of the other ranks;
- politicization in the sense of linkages with elements of the political process, usually but not always the Right, in line with their political views;
- divisions between officers and other ranks along lines of race;
- a tendency to institutional deliberation about national issues;
- greatest power to the army within the three services;
- enormous interservice rivalry;
- Prussianism;
- exaggerated sense of self-worth related to being the embodiment of national values;
- deprecatory attitude toward politicians and the democratic process;
- roles much more linked to internal security than to national defense against foreign states;
- little international combat experience;
- small numbers of high-prestige weapon systems alongside bulk items of much lesser sophistication;
- armed forces as the "school of the nation" through conscription or other means;
- overwhelming role of the United States in training, equipment, weapons provision and doctrine;
- corruption at a high level when given responsibility to govern or when in roles that allow them access to wealth, such as antidrug operations;
- common problem of overweight officers and Senior NCOs;
- "acato pero no cumpla" phenomenon of disregard of orders from above;
- excessive number of courses and insufficient time in real command of troops, during exercise and on ranges;
- privileges for officers not linked to responsibilities for troops' well-being;
- distance between officers and other ranks too great;
- racial makeup of country not reflected in officer corps or troops.

Accepting that this is far from a perfect picture of the particularities of Latin American armed forces, it is nonetheless possible to accept the bulk of these elements as being present in most of the forces and as having become symbolic of the nature of these services. To what extent then can one say that the FAR share these features?

It is perhaps surprising for some but the FAR in fact have little resemblance to these other armed forces if the list of frequently seen characteristics given above is considered. But since their future role may be close to that seen over time in so many of these other countries, and since Cuba is most definitely a Latin American country, it is worthwhile to look at this matter more closely.

On the first frequently observed "characteristic," that of an exaggerated *number of senior officers* when considered alongside the number of all ranks, the FAR have little of the Latin American norm. The officer corps of the forces has been cut massively during the savage reductions of the Special Period and it would appear to be closely in keeping with what one would expect from the plan for the future FAR.

Naturally, in any cuts of this kind, the number of officers reflects many issues ranging from what kind of reserve force system will still remain and will need leadership at a variety of levels in case of mobilization, to the number of officers in navies and air forces as compared with army officer positions. This is because of the more technical jobs entailed in these services, and therefore the larger percentage of officers as opposed to other ranks therein when compared with the labor-intensive army. So the balance of forces desired after the cuts are completed must be kept in mind in judging whether things are proper.

The exact numbers involved are not known. But there is no reason to suspect that the cuts in officer strength, compared to those for other ranks, are in any way odd. Nor does there appear to be an attempt to retain larger numbers of officers than would be appropriate in the kind of force the FAR have been ordered to become—smaller, leaner, less technical and sophisticated, and less actively deployed in immediate duties than was the case before. And since the FAR were not particularly "over officered" before the Special Period it would not seem that they are so today. Thus in this highly traditional Latin American problem area, Cuba seems to be an exception.

The *politicization* question is of course a more vexing one. It is impossible for *revolutionary* armed forces not to be "political." And we have argued throughout this book that the FAR are indeed, in almost every meaningful respect, revolutionary armed forces. The FAR are the armed forces of a specific revolutionary process, one designed to provide what María del Pilar Díaz Castañón, one of the best historians of the Cuban ideological revolution, has called a "subversion of the social totality" of the previously dominant system.¹⁶

They are, of course, closely linked to a political party and in that are similar to some phases in the history of other Latin American forces. Many officers, especially senior ones, are members of the Communist Party and this has been true since the early 1960s. There are "political"

officers in the FAR tasked with maintaining the force's ideological purity although it must be admitted that they do not, in Cuba, threaten in any way the concept of unity of command or of a single chain of command. In all these senses, the Cuban armed forces are "political"; however, not "political" as in the Latin American norm.

The FAR do not take part in politics as understood elsewhere in Latin America. Elements of the political system do not "knock at the barracks door" in order to get the military's support for a candidate for office or for a particular policy choice in the way that became traditional in the region since independence. The forces are not the arbiters of national politics in Cuba as they have been there in the past, as well as in so many other countries, even though, as we will see, they may become such in the future.

Instead, there is one political leader, head of the one political party, who is at the same time commander-in-chief of the armed forces. While the last point is of course true of all Latin American presidents in their role as formal heads of state, in Cuba it is much more than honorific. Since the country is considered to be under siege, and since the Special Period is aimed at addressing a strategic context full of danger for the island, the whole population is theoretically at least involved in some way or another in national defense, and uses the term "comandante en jefe" (or the shorter "comandante," replete with revolutionary lore) on a constant basis to describe the president. The armed forces have their own relationship with him based especially on this commander-in-chief role.

As is well known around the world, Fidel is almost always in uniform. His speeches to medical schools, at the openings of new factories, or at sessions of civilian assemblies are virtually all delivered by him not only dressed in military uniform but also speaking as a military commander. His language, even today, is full of references to discipline, courage, defense, the struggle, unity of command, overcoming obstacles in order to be victorious, the enemy, seizing the initiative, high moral commitment, devotion to the *patria* and the entire well-known panoply of words from the military lexicon. And this is of course doubly the case when the audience is a military one. Fidel is a military man although he is not in any Latin American traditional sense a military dictator.

Fidel speaks, cajoles, instructs, informs, orders, argues, convinces, and sparks loyalty as a military commander and leader dealing with his subordinates. It is an exceptional process and one with which military men in any army would be familiar. Under these circumstances, working as a military officer or in any other rank is both political and not political. It is political in the sense that the task ahead is eminently

political in its orientation and objectives. It is not political in that it does not generally seek to put the forces in a position where they dictate to someone else what course the nation will take, or that a particular position is being served compared to others in front of the body politic.

In Cuba, Fidel makes the decisions and the military do their part in carrying them out. These decisions are orders and while there is considerable room to discuss the merits of different options before the decision is made, once it is made military discipline is expected to apply, and indeed does. If this is true for Cuban society as a whole, it is especially the case for the armed forces, wed to discipline as they are.

In Latin America, the issue has traditionally been that the forces themselves deliberate on the rights and wrongs of a variety of options. They then decide when the results of their deliberations will be put into place. And they often find allies to help them do so. Of course in practice it is usually elements of the body politic that seek them as allies and that come to the forces to ask them for their help in moving forward a particular agenda, which the military are expected to back in order to "save the country," "stop decline," "halt the move to chaos," or any number of other calls. This is not the Cuban experience since, but was before, 1959.

The *racial question* in the military in Latin America has always been a significant one. The existence of a small white elite surrounded by vast numbers of the original native peoples, or blacks, mulattos, or some combination of all of these, gave rise to a highly nervous governing class. But imperial demands as of the eighteenth century obliged local societies to raise significant numbers of troops for local defense. The only means of ensuring an adequate defense was through the raising of local units. And given the racial makeup of the Spanish American empire this meant raising black, mulatto, or even Indian units and, of course, training and arming them. While this was often anathema to local elites, Madrid was in no mood to bargain and such units were indeed raised.

With independence local elites were of course completely in the ascendancy. The success of the Royalists in recruiting blacks, mulattos, and Indians had served as a lesson to the elites as to the extent of the distrust and fear they provoked in their own subject populations. And a firm pattern of a small class of officers with mass armies of the poor became the rule after the poorer and nonwhite elements were, at least in large part, purged from the officer ranks in the years after independence. In most of Latin America, senior officers tend to be of Spanish or only slightly mixed origin. Other ranks, especially in those countries applying conscription, tend to be black, mulatto, mestizo,

or native. There are many exceptions to this rule, especially in armies that have seen action recently, but the rule is a powerful one, with deep historic and cultural roots.

In Cuba the FAR of today show little of all this. There were black officers in the *Ejército Rebelde* and there are many more in the FAR today. The black and mulatto tradition in the *Mambí* armies of the nineteenth century, as we have seen, can hardly be exaggerated. And the departure of so many wealthy whites during the years of the Revolution has made Cuba a place of still more prominence for the black population. Mulattos in particular are visible in the senior ranks.

This does not mean that such groups are represented at senior ranks to the same degree as they are in the population at large. There are no data for such an assertion and observation would appear to suggest that it is not the case. However, there are many from such groups in the senior ranks of the armed forces and even the most casual look at the FAR shows a degree of penetration into the senior ranks by black and mulatto officers, which would simply be unthinkable anywhere else in Latin America. Indeed, it is hard to imagine such a thing anywhere in the Americas, outside the former British West Indies, and in formerly Dutch Surinam.

On the questions related to *army dominance* of the three-service FAR, there is some close connection to the Latin American norm. While Argentina, Brazil, and Chile traditionally had navies of some importance, this has not been the case for the rest of Latin America. The same can be said of the air force in more recent decades. Cuba, although an island, never had a major naval force before the Revolution. The *Mambí* forces never had a maritime presence except for some hired shipping. Further, after independence it was not in the U.S. interest that the Rural Guard or the new armed forces have a naval element of importance. Only with World War II did Washington come to interest itself in Havana disposing of a proper naval force. World War II meant a small navy for the island, but despite the permanent presence of a U.S. Naval Mission the fleet never amounted to much.

The Soviet connection changed all that. With a real U.S. threat to the island, Moscow slowly but surely moved to give the Cuban navy the means to be a true fleet. With time submarines, escort vessels, minelayers, minesweepers, landing ships, transport vessels, and a host of other naval shipping was transferred to the Cubans. Equally important, and with a favorable impact even today, the Soviet navy had real comparative advantages for the Cubans.

Soviet Baltic and Black Sea operations, and those of the Russian navy before and since, have needed smaller vessels than those of the

"blue water fleet" of the post-1960s days or even of the occasional heydays of the Tsarist navy. The Soviet navy developed a number of classes of patrol vessels aimed at operations in these waters, and to some extent also in those of the Soviet Far East. The most famous of these were missile-equipped boats of great speed. Others were all-gun vessels but also fast and available in large numbers.

A considerable quantity of these craft was transferred to Cuba in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. It was often in large part with reference to them that the United States complained of Cuba posing a naval threat. While in truth little more than a potential annoyance factor, the Cuban navy could at various times have constituted a very limited threat to the United States during a much wider conflict with the Soviet Union. The Pentagon's traditional displeasure with Havana was based on this analysis.

Be that as it may, this transfer of equipment and shipping to Cuba could not come without the training to make it effective. The Soviet navy provided their Cuban homologs with a vast range of training ranging from senior command at sea in large-scale operations to radar and sophisticated equipment training for ratings. Much of this was done in Cuba, and some on a "train the trainer" basis. But much was also done in the Soviet Union itself.

Given its island status, the nature and level of Soviet support, and the likelihood of the enemy, coming mainly by sea, to be deterred or defeated, the Cuban navy gained in priority and status as never before. But this could not survive the end of the Soviet connection. Even before 1990, Moscow had shown itself ever less interested in transferring equipment that would possibly attract U.S. attention and possibly even raise Washington's ire. Accusations about the great port of Cienfuegos being used as a Soviet submarine installation, or at least as a logistics support facility for Soviet ships, were troubling to the Soviets. By the mid-1980s, transfers had virtually come to an end although some naval training was still being done.

The Special Period, as discussed elsewhere in this book, has been especially hard on the navy, dependent as it is on spare parts, fuel, technological advances, international connections, wide-ranging training, occasional real firing of weapons, and much more to an even greater extent than the land force.¹⁷ We have noted how most of its remaining ships do not put to sea with any frequency, and there is the now usual cannibalization of some craft in order to keep others operating. And as we have also assessed, the nature of the illegal emigration and drug problems are such that these duties get most of the slim resources available to the navy and to its closely related naval branch of MININT's Border Troops.

Under these circumstances the navy's relative power among the three services has slipped badly. And thus after some time away from the Latin American norm in terms of influence among the three services, the Cuban navy has returned to it.

The air force was also under Batista of World War II vintage essentially, provided by the United States over the years of that conflict under Lend-Lease provisions. With the Soviet connection, it had grown into probably the most important air force in Latin America; however, since the Special Period its position has slipped. Its ups and downs have been impressive. From no position at all in the Rebel Army, a force entirely lacking in air power, the new revolutionary air arm, using aircraft taken over when power was seized in January 1959, and which then fought at Playa Girón in 1961, came out of that battle with honors galore. And the new Soviet connection that followed on the heels of this struggle ensured that the new place of the air force continued until recent times.

For nearly 30 years Moscow transferred to the Revolutionary Air Force all manner of aircraft and provided equally wide-ranging training to its personnel. Pilots to ground crew were either trained in the Soviet Union or in Cuba by Soviets although much of this was again on a "train the trainer" basis. Senior officers of the air element were also instructed and given course vacancies at higher air force institutes of education in the USSR. Spare parts were abundant. And while often an eye was kept open for U.S. reactions to sophisticated aircraft transfers, the Cubans were fortunate indeed to get a number of very modern systems right up to the end of the Soviet connection when Mig-29s were part of the last major transfer undertaken.

Such attention could not help but make the air force more of an equal partner with the army, especially given the nature of the job to be done. The likely enemy was a major air power and would doubtless not only use airpower to strike first in the case of invasion but would also fly in a large part of any invasion force. Thus a first-class capability in the air made good sense, reinforced by the whole 1961 experience, the nature of the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the virtually constant presence of U.S. overflights and other aerial espionage and occasional harassment efforts.

Here again the end of the Soviet connection was decisive. Lacking vital fuel, with little or no access to spare parts, and with steadily aging equipment and aircraft, the Revolutionary Air Force also lost ground to the once again first priority, the army. And once again, as with the navy, we have seen its former prestige and relative centrality greatly reduced and it begin to compare more with the usual position of a Latin American air force rather than the rather grand experience of the

halcyon days of the Soviet connection. Its main roles now relate, as with the navy, to the antidrug and anti-illegal emigration responsibilities of the FAR and especially to the TGF. And while this ensures it some priority, it must seem precious little to even not so senior personnel who knew better times.

The army has thus gained the absolute upper hand again. Not only is it less dependent on fuel, technology, sophisticated vehicles, and spare parts, but also it tends to pay its own way to a much greater degree than do the other services. The army ensures that the FAR are fed and maintained and thus contributes directly to national survival. In addition, any internal security role is most dependent on the land force as can be seen by the personnel sent to MININT in recent years.

Having said all this, the *interservice rivalry* in the Revolutionary Armed Forces can in few ways be compared with that so common in other Latin American countries. Cooperation among the three services is very good. There is little jealousy over percentages of budgets because all serving officers know perfectly well the exigencies of the Special Period, the strategic context as it now is, the need to do some things particularly well, and others much less well. And while debate does exist about where priorities should be placed, the realities of the present context limit that debate. And finally, discipline in the FAR, in the final analysis, is very strict, and devotion to the common cause very strong. All this militates powerfully against the kind of interservice rivalry seen almost everywhere else in the region.

Prussianism, the exaggerated affection for discipline, order, military ways, and the rest, has made less headway in Cuba than in some other countries in the region, and this is true in the armed forces as well. While it would be impossible to deny the influence of Prussian ideas on the Soviet (and former Russian) armies, those methods and practices associated with Prussianism crossed with difficulty into the Caribbean even in the days of maximum Soviet influence. The U.S. army had certainly been under some Prussian influence in the 1898-1902 period when it occupied Cuba. But this seems not to have been greatly reflected in U.S. plans for what was after all going to be merely a Rural Guard to protect property and keep order.

Cuba is an island in the Caribbean. It is hot and humid much of the year and given to a love of music, dance, rum, beer, tobacco, and the other pleasures of life. The army of the pseudo-republic was a relaxed affair even if ridden with corruption, favoritism, and incompetence. The Rebel Army that beat it so soundly was a much more disciplined force, Fidel, Raúl, and Che seeing to that.¹⁸ And with the U.S. challenge present so soon, this discipline was to become firmer still with the new Revolutionary Armed Forces.

These forces are still disciplined and generally competent. However, they are not "Prussian." Cuban officers and soldiers laugh in uniform, walk around in public holding their partner's hand, and kiss in greeting persons of the opposite sex (and even of their own if they happen to be cousins or closer) while in uniform, and generally enjoy life's pleasures, even in the Special Period, in ways that do not quickly remind one of the other armed forces connected at one time or another with the Soviets or with other highly Prussianized armed forces. Soviet officers remarked upon this Caribbean flavor, what Fidel referred to as "*comunismo con una cara cubana*," and contrasted it with dour conditions of service common to their country and its more direct European allies.¹⁹ It is possible to argue that no Latin American army other than the Chilean in fact became Prussianized and there is a great deal of truth to this.²⁰ But in Cuba, nevertheless, the fact remains more marked still.

As for the *exaggerated sense of self-worth* and the feeling that they alone represent the essence of national values, the FAR are very different from the historic Latin American mold. In most of Latin America, the roles of the armed forces over so many decades have given them a clear idea that they alone can save their countries from forces out to destroy them. With their sense of honor and service, their *don de soi*, and their willingness to die "for the patria," they have generally felt they, and only they, are somehow worthy of the role of national defenders and leaders.

This certainly existed in theory in the pre-Revolutionary army whose officer corps had a highly exaggerated sense of its own importance to the nation, even when its behavior proved scandalously hurtful for that very body. But such sentiments fit ill with a FAR that is after all merely one element, albeit the lead element, of a whole "nation in arms." Since in theory at least, and in many ways in practice under the best terms of the *Guerra de Todo el Pueblo*, the whole country defends itself, the role of the regular forces is by definition limited to only certain tasks.

While the regular force must obviously provide the leadership, logistics, training, cadres, stiffening, doctrine, organization, mobilization arrangements, and a great deal else for the nation's mobilizable base, the size, structure, and important taskings of that base ensure that their own roles do not give the FAR regulars exclusive centrality. The whole mystique of the nation in arms, the defense of the country against such ferocious odds, and the defense of the Revolution as well, work to limit the potential pretensions of a regular force whose main job is, at least officially, to coordinate the national defense effort and not to dominate it.

All are officially prepared to die for the country. All are to have the proper spirit of sacrifice where its defense is concerned. The reservist is in theory as much a part of the national defense effort as is the regular. And the commander in chief gives the lead as to where that effort is to go. It does not ever fall to the regular armed forces to do such a thing. The Cuban case does not follow the traditional Latin American pattern in this sphere.

This is not to say that there is no corporate spirit in the FAR. There most certainly is. But it is a *serving* corporate spirit, and seemingly only much more rarely a *self-serving* one. The links to the Party, to the *comandante en jefe* himself, the command exercised by a historic leader of the Revolution Raúl Castro, and the revolutionary traditions to which we have so often made reference generally work successfully against the imposition of a more Latin American mold here. No officer would imagine, or at least dare to voice, comments that were favorable to the FAR but were obviously in contrast to the best interests of the *patria* or the Revolution. This is not very "Latin American" either.

The *deprecatory attitude of Latin American militaries toward civilian politicians and democracy* is even less "Cuban." Not all politicians are members of the Communist Party but most of them are and thus are fellow actors in the Revolution that the FAR are there to defend. Their debates take place in a disciplined structure where the words of the commander in chief are taken by all as absolutely final, a reflection of a military culture with which the FAR are obviously more than familiar and comfortable. Indeed, the members of the FAR who are also Party faithful often find themselves in debate with these same politicians.

Thus it would be odd indeed to find the same negative attitudes that one finds in most of Latin America among military officers in Cuba where politicians are concerned. Instead, the main politician is the military leader as well in a kind of "Churchillian" arrangement with which the FAR live easily. The one area where one does sense some of the Latin American norm is in the points on the "pincho" raised earlier. Many officers, especially juniors, do feel that some politicians enjoy privileges that they do not deserve. But this reaction is perhaps to be expected in a force so closely linked to the population as is the FAR.

As for democracy, the FAR as an institution of course believe in the revolutionary process and officially back the democratic elements of the regime and those reforms made to the electoral system and representation at all levels during the Special Period.²¹ Democracy is not really practiced within the FAR any more than in most armed forces. And the same difficulties for some human rights one sees in Cuban society as a whole are also present within the ranks. But much less is heard of them given military discipline.

The key role given to the armed forces of most Latin American countries in the field of *internal security* has been referred to more than once in this book. While there has been significant change in recent years in a number of countries of the region where this issue is concerned, the fact remains that armed forces are either constitutionally or indirectly responsible for internal security in most parts of Latin America. And given the history of the region's countries, it is in this role that most armed forces have spent most of their time, and regrettably also most of their live ammunition.

This was of course also the case in Cuba until 1959. But since then the Cuban record is an extraordinary one. Not only have there been no cases of the armed forces firing on the people, but also there has been a strategic plan in place that has given the population access to weapons on a scale unimagined at any other time in the nation's history.²² This has been made much of in the Revolutionary defense of its record in democracy and human rights. And of course there is something to be said for a system so sure of popular support that it allows its weapons to be placed dramatically in their hands. It is perhaps worth quoting Fidel's own words on this point:

In no country does the people identify with the state, with the government, as in Cuba, because our people can say: "the State is I," because our people is the army, it is the forces by itself and for itself; it is a people armed, and it is a people which exists because it has been capable of defending itself. . . . In our country not only do the people have the right to vote but also the people have the right to be armed: the farmers, the workers, the students, all in a people armed.²³

On the other hand, it must be admitted that such is the state of control of weapons, training, structures, transport, spare parts, ammunition, and the rest of the panoply of means necessary to make the use of weapons count that critics can say with some truth that to give too much credence to this argument is simply counterintuitive. This is true to a point but it must also be recognized that in the majority of "democracies" of Latin America it is simply inconceivable that the citizens of the country would be given *any* sort of access to the arms of the state.

On the issue of the use of the military against the public, the case for Cuba is a strong, if still imperfect, one. To quote the commander-in-chief himself:

In more than 30 years of the Revolution you have never seen a single one of these episodes, of the army and the police repressing students, workers, neighbours. This has never been seen in Cuba because in our

country we have achieved such a unity, such an identity, such a linkage between State and people, between government and people, and between those in charge and the people.²⁴

It would be unfair to take this too far either. The repressive state apparatus in Cuba is an impressive one, including not only in time of crisis the armed forces but also at all times a powerful MININT, a worryingly omnipresent police force (at least where tourism flourishes), a system of CDRs, and much else to keep people's behavior under observation and to a great extent under control.²⁵ Self-censorship is the rule in Cuba and the state is rarely obliged to step in where the public knows very well that misbehavior will find some sort of retribution.

It is important, however, not to be overly critical either. Cuba is in many senses truly "under siege" and no country with Cuba's history, nor any other government of the island, would accept the current situation while providing full guarantees of all civil liberties to all. For our purposes, the most important point here is that the FAR have as an article of faith that they do not fire on the people and they are anxious to preserve that reputation at almost any cost. In my view, and with obvious reservations, they can well be proud of a record virtually unmatched in Latin America over the last more than 40 years.²⁶

This is hardly to accuse the armed forces of Latin America of being alone in some sort of bloody past. As we have said, studies of the political behavior of Latin American armed forces show conclusively that they rarely act alone but rather are almost always called upon to act by civilian elements of the political system of their countries. They may well be the usual executors of such actions but they are much less often either their intellectual or political authors. What is being said here is that the FAR can claim a special status in that it does not fit into the traditional view of the use of Latin American armed forces in internal security duties.

Another feature of Latin American military forces is their *relative lack of international experience of war*. While this is changing under the impact of modern peace support operations, in general the image still applies. In World War I, only Brazil actually deployed any military force in the fighting and that was a naval squadron acting alongside the Royal Navy.²⁷ In World War II, Brazil again took some action, this time sending a full infantry division to the Italian campaign to fight with the U.S. army, and mobilizing naval and air forces for the blocking of the Atlantic Ocean.²⁸ In World War II, Mexico also sent an air squadron to the Philippines. Other countries cooperated on a very limited scale with air and naval resources, largely provided by the

United States in any case under Lend-Lease, but almost all helped on the economic front giving the Allies access to raw materials, agricultural products, and, in the Mexican case, even cheap labor.²⁹

Since that now long ago conflict, only the Korean War saw any extra-hemispheric action in a full combat context. Then, Colombia sent one infantry battalion to serve alongside the United States and other U.N. forces there. Of much more importance in that conflict was the supply of strategic minerals to the United States, an activity enhanced by the Mutual Defense Assistance Pacts of the time that Washington signed with most countries of the region and which are in almost all cases still in place and still the framework for bilateral cooperation between the United States and regional armed forces.³⁰

It was only with the growth of peacekeeping that things started to change although it must be said that for long the term "peacekeeping" was associated in the region with U.S. demands for legitimization and assistance with their own attempts to maintain their preferences in the Latin American order of things during the cold war.³¹ While a few countries had contributed forces before 1989 to U.N. operations, Uruguay standing out in this regard, it was only later that peacekeeping and peace operations began to attract major Latin American attention.

Argentina, already involved before 1989 in a small way, found itself the major contributor of forces among all the Latin American countries, and even sent warships to the Persian Gulf during the 1991 war. Uruguay broadened its role with the United Nations. Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, and some smaller states joined in as well. But the forces sent were not major ones and large parts of Latin American national armed forces were not involved. In addition, naval and air forces were much less represented than were army troops and of course the whole trend, except arguably where Uruguay was concerned, was a relatively very recent one.

Thus, although the situation is changing with some speed, it is still fairly true to say that Latin American armed forces do not have major exposure either to overseas roles or to working with allied forces; this applies even to those who work most closely with the United States. And virtually no one in Latin America has combat experience against foreigners in recent years, only the Argentines having the disastrous showing of the Falklands/Malvinas War some two decades ago, and the Peruvians and Ecuadorians their short but sharp war of 1995.³²

Cuba differs in this regard. Its forces have been deployed abroad, and far away from the island, in recent decades to a degree truly unheard of in the Third World. As we have seen, especially in Africa but to some extent in Latin America as well, the FAR have been

present in fighting, training, assessing, advising, providing logistics, and much else at one time or another over the last four decades. The FAR have been tested against European-style white South African forces and have shown their mettle in that fighting. They have even had a brief brush with the United States in the disastrous Grenada episode of 1983.³³

Reserve medical officers have served, usually as civilians, with all manner of activities in support of medical projects approved by the Cuban state. But it must also be admitted that this is now getting to be dated experience as well. Despite offers, the United States ensured that Cuba was not given a chance to participate in the U.N. Haitian operation in the 1990s. And in general Washington has made clear that it will oppose any use of Cuban forces as part of a U.N. operation, essentially anywhere in the world. This is particularly curious given the good work done by the Cubans in Central American relief efforts after disasters where the U.S. armed forces were also involved in the humanitarian work done.

Thus the FAR have a much longer and more impressive international, and internationalist, tradition than do most other Latin American armed forces. Indeed, it is surely the case that they are first among these forces in terms of that experience since World War II: But it must also be said that at the moment, while other Latin American armed forces, especially the Argentines, are gaining much wider experience abroad, the FAR are more isolated from the outside world than at any time in their history. This must have its effects and few of them are positive. But once again the distance between the FAR and the rest of Latin America's armed forces is again reflected strongly here.

Another element often noted of Latin American armed forces concerns their *equipment and weaponry*. Traditionally, these forces deploy a small number of sophisticated weapons systems, but behind this façade there is not much modern weaponry or equipment. This is true of modern jet aircraft systems for air forces that do not necessarily have much else of modern types, of modern armored vehicles for some units while others have very old vehicles indeed, and of a few sophisticated ship types while the rest of the fleet is old.³⁴ The main reason for this is generally given as prestige although it must also be said that there is an element of keeping up to date with trends in weaponry by operating in this fashion. And for many bilateral or tri-lateral conflict situations and deterrence arrangements or strategic balance contexts, these weapon systems also play a role in establishing the legitimacy of claims to status.

This is not true of the FAR over the last 40 years. As mentioned earlier, the Soviet Union ensured that Cuba had quite sophisticated

equipment and weaponry virtually across the board during the good old days of the "alliance." The navy, air force, and army were better equipped overall than were those of any Latin American country. Having said this, it should be noted that with the Special Period this has changed abruptly. The special roles of the navy and air force are such that some equipment and weapon systems, in small numbers, are being maintained at the very height of efficiency. Here, reference is yet again made to those useful in anti-illegal emigration and antidrug operations. And of course in the case of the army, deterrence and defense roles crucial to the territorial defense role vis-à-vis the United States keep, as we have suggested earlier, some units at fighting peak while many others are at anything but that level of readiness.

Thus the FAR are more and more similar to the Latin American norm where sophisticated weaponry is concerned, but not for the reasons that that norm applies in most of the other countries' armed forces. But even this needs some *nuance*. While the FAR keep some systems for reasons not directly connected to prestige, they also do things that relate to the need to have the best reputation possible in the United States. And that is prestige in the most direct sense, prestige capable of deterrence where that deterrence is the main role of these armed forces.

Similar ideas are reflected in Cuba and in most of the rest of Latin America where the idea of the army as the *school of the nation* is concerned. Cuba, at roughly 44,000 square miles, is not a large country as Latin American states go. Thus, its size has not acted as an enemy of attempts at nation-building. But its exceptional length most certainly has done so, as has historically its wide-open spaces dividing zones of settlement. The result is that Cuba is very definitely a country of regions. Pinar del Río in the west considers itself distinctly different from neighboring Havana and *habaneros* return the feeling and then some. The central region of Las Villas has similar views of differences between itself and both east and west. Above all, the large old province of Oriente, first to be settled and divided for the last quarter century into four new provinces (Granma, Guantánamo, Holguín, and Santiago) and separated from Camagüey by the creation of a fifth—Las Tunas—has serious grievances against Havana. It has reason to feel that it was forgotten for centuries, and, while doubtless this situation has improved impressively since 1959, these resentments are not entirely gone. It must also be said that the people of Havana have traditionally viewed the rest of the country, as their own saying goes, as little more than the *lawn* for the capital.³⁵

While Cuba's native population was massacred, died from disease, or was assimilated easily, the arrival of hundreds of thousands of black

slaves, and later on tens of thousands of Chinese "coolies," has meant that the country is a racial mix of sometimes bewildering complexity. Mixes of black and white, black and Chinese, white and Chinese, and further mixes of these, as well as the very slight remaining traces of native blood, are shown in a dazzling show of features that can keep one guessing as to the exact ethnic makeup of the person with whom one is dealing.³⁶

The progress made by the Revolution in the eradication or at least reduction in the worst elements of racial prejudice has been simply remarkable. But racial prejudice is still far from gone. Indeed, the particular strains of a time like the Special Period are felt by some Cubans to be exacerbating prejudices largely held in check in the relatively good days lived by the island until 1990, and this is especially the case in perceptions of one another between the white and black communities.

Equally, class lines were firmly drawn when the Revolution triumphed in 1959. Cuba was very stratified socially with little mixing among classes except for the large-scale presence of domestic servants in upper-class homes. Needless to say little of this remains although, as we see elsewhere in this text, the availability of dollars is a major dividing line between the standards of living of Cubans and is doubtless again creating two or many classes on the island. In this context, it is important to underscore that despite the "remesa" and related "dollarization" phenomena, class distinctions are only now beginning to be more visible. Quite ferocious state taxation of individual enterprises ensures that there are fewer people breaking class solidarity than might seem likely. But there are still quite a few of them and their frequently ostentatious lifestyles, added to those of some people receiving "remesas" as well as those of many Cuban Americans coming home on holiday, do impress people and cause a great deal of comment.

Thus, the Cuban mosaic has been, and to some extent still is, a striking one and national unity has had to be created in the face of these differences. Regional issues were at the forefront of matters bringing about rebel defeat in the first war of independence from Spain. Racial issues also played a part in that the lack of unity in insurgent forces was largely a result of the combination of racial and regional factors overwhelming the sense of a need for winning the fight against the mother country. This issue of unity has been raised frequently here. The point to be made is that Cuba has been far from heterogeneous throughout most of its history and to change it into as relatively homogeneous as it is today, at least spiritually, has been an enormous task.

Many Latin American countries face similar or even superior levels of challenge where nation-building has been, and is, concerned. Geography has been even less kind to most of them than it has been to Cuba. In virtually all these cases the army has come to be seen as the "school of the nation." But in these countries the idea that the army, through a system of compulsory service, would take in young men from all parts of the country, and from all walks of life, and would not only make them live and work together but also would do so for the greater benefit of the "patria," took hold with force. This reflected weak societies desperately needing a sense of nationality for their citizens and effective nation-building to face growing challenges.

Compulsory national service as an idea spread rapidly in Latin America in the late nineteenth century. While defense questions were of course the background for the idea, its "sale" to public and parliaments alike constantly returned to the concept of the "school of the nation." It was a means to overcome regional, racial, and class divisions and make a new and devoted youth conscious as never before of its nationality and of the need to defend the nation.

In Cuba, the situation could hardly have been more different. The Rural Guard and even the regular army were set up to defuse nationalism, rather than build or reinforce it. In some parts of Central America, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, U.S. occupiers were intelligent enough to understand that emphasizing the idea of a school of the nation could have nationalistic, and eventually anti-American, elements to it. Thus, the concept gained little ground in the years after Washington set up armies in the regional countries it occupied from time to time.

Therefore, in that sense it is no surprise that in Cuba the interest in such an idea came into play essentially with the Castro Revolution. The relatively small and spoiled army of the pseudo-Republic did not need conscription to maintain its numbers. Recruitment was not especially difficult given the economic conditions of the country and the many perks military service provided the individual soldier. As seen earlier, the United States was not interested in the idea of a Cuban school for the nation. Therefore, we see virtually no reflection of the idea until 1959.

The government set up by Fidel Castro had, of course, many more powerful enemies than did any other in Cuban history. And one of those enemies soon showed itself to be the greatest power on earth. Thus, nearly from the beginning of the Revolutionary experiment, the idea of national defense needed to include the whole population in order to have a chance for successful deterrence of invasion. The armed forces were to be massive, popular, and less professional than

elsewhere in Latin America but they were also to be part of a strong state.

Elsewhere in Latin America, the state tends to be weak and the armed forces strong. In Cuba, under Castro the state has been strong and the armed forces have been strong as well. The massive alphabetization campaign of the early 1960s provided a school for the nation in the literal sense and campaigns of nation-building accompanied everything the Revolution did in defense, education, and reform generally. The school of the nation would be revolutionary service across the board, and armed forces service under the new conscription arrangements of 1963 was only one part of this.

The FAR are well aware of a school of the nation element to national service. It is referred to in many speeches on the subject of military service to the serving soldier, sailor, and airman as well as to the public at large. But it is not central in the way it has been seen in so much of Latin America simply because the Cuban state does not need its army to take on this role as much as do most other countries. Cuban nationality was well established long before Castro but has been anchored further since. Many divisive issues have been resolved or at least put largely to rest since the Revolution. And this has meant that the school of the nation advantages are nice to have but are not central.

Another key element differentiating the FAR from other Latin American armed forces is, not surprisingly, the *relationship with the United States*. The links between the Cuban armed forces and the U.S. army, navy, and air force from 1898 until 1959 could hardly have been closer. As discussed at some length earlier, the Rural Guard and indeed the Cuban national army were both formed by the U.S. military during the two main occupations of the island after 1898 and were deeply and directly influenced by it afterward.

The United States had dominated arms acquisitions, training, doctrine, organizational patterns, and virtually everything else in the Cuban military during the pseudo-Republic. The end of that connection was not immediate because Fidel did not think it was wise to move against the sizeable U.S. military missions on the island until the time was right. Indeed, he probably had in mind some possible assistance from the United States at least early on in the new government's tenure. But the Rebel Army never incorporated or used their potential after its entry into Havana in January 1959. Instead the missions were simply marginalized entirely having no real role alongside the new army.

In virtually the rest of Latin America, the links with the U.S. military are one of the main marks of the inter-American system's

functioning. The fact is that the connections between the armed forces of Latin American countries and those of the United States are usually close and often virtually exclusive of other potential actors. This may change from time to time, such as in reformist Peru in the late 1960s and 1970s, or in Sandinista Nicaragua from 1979 until 1990, but these changes have always proven temporary.³⁷

In the first place, the inter-American security "system," put in place in a long series of phases since before World War II, is absolutely dominated by the United States in an asymmetrical relationship more reminiscent of the Warsaw Pact than of NATO. Muscle began to be added to the joint neutrality statements already made before 1941 after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December of that year. The Inter-American Defense Board was set up in February of the next year to coordinate inter-American military defense against the Axis, and a similar but smaller organization did the same with the effort to stem the fascist propaganda effort in the hemisphere. In ways that were to become automatic over the next 60 years, both organizations were headquartered in Washington and headed by senior U.S. officers.

While the "joint" effort was far from perfect, it allowed a number of elements of progress where the United States was concerned. The idea of the hemisphere as a defense community, assisted by the then near-decade of the "Good Neighbor Policy," gained ground even with many suspicious of U.S. designs. Lend-Lease arrangements, allowing for the transfer of equipment and weapons to allies in the anti-Axis cause, were extended to most Latin American countries. And the major transfers made, combined with the absence of European competitors for arms sales then either busy fighting against, or more often occupied by, the Axis powers, meant that U.S. dominance in arms became almost complete.

After the war, further arrangements were put in place as part of a more effective political organization to replace the less formal Pan American Union (PAU), whose roots went all the way back to the First Pan American Conference of 1889. The year 1947 saw the signing of a collective security agreement, the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (ITRA) or Rio Pact. And in 1948 the PAU was formally replaced by the Organization of American States, the Charter of which included in Chapters V and VI a repetition of the collective security arrangements stated in the Pact. Thus, a formal, if still fairly loose, inter-American security system was born, which included all of the independent states of the Americas except Canada. And once again the central organ of the organization was placed in Washington.

Further muscle was added to these paper arrangements during the Korean War. It came in the form of bilateral Mutual Assistance Pacts

with most Latin American countries. These provided U.S. training, equipment, logistics support, and weapons on special terms, and in return the Latin American states promised cooperation, especially in strategic minerals and agricultural products needed in time of crisis by the larger partner. Cuba was one of the first nations of Latin America to sign such an accord, and the Batista regime was to benefit greatly from its being in place.

With the Cuban Revolution and later its export of revolution phase, the United States wished to reinforce the arrangements and a number of other parts of the "system" were added. Annual or biannual meetings of the commanders of armies, navies, and air forces of the hemisphere (save Canada and now Cuba, of course) were arranged in order to coordinate military measures against the "communist threat." A "School of the Americas," specializing in counterinsurgency, was set up to train Latin American forces in jobs related to that role in their own countries. An Inter-American Defense College, based on the model of the NATO Defence College, was organized to train Latin American officers in inter-American defense issues. A series of joint exercises among Latin American forces and their U.S. counterparts was set up.³⁸ As had by now become automatic, all commanders of such new institutions were U.S. officers and all were put in U.S. military installations on U.S. territory. The asymmetries of the inter-American system were never so obvious.

Thus, at the multilateral level the links between Latin American armed forces and those of the United States are very close indeed. No such institutional infrastructure has ever existed among these independent countries and European or other states, or indeed even among themselves. While some Latin American countries do have some minor arrangements with one or the other European state in terms of training or weapons development and acquisition, these pale into insignificance alongside the key relationship with the United States. Only the Peruvians and Sandinistas were ever able to break this mold and then only for a while. It is often at the bilateral level that the links are most important. The U.S. military missions present in many Latin American states, the training and weapons and equipment arrangements between Washington and individual capitals, Mutual Assistance Pacts and the joint work they permit in many defense fields, and the plethora of contacts among individuals over decades, make for a connection that would be the envy of many more formal empires.

Thus Cuba is very much the "odd man out" where the relationship with the United States is concerned. For Havana, the United States is the enemy, a massive power bent on the destruction of the Cuban social, economic, and political system and the reimposition of virtual

colonial rule. And thus cooperation with the military bulwark of that enemy cannot be overly great or overly public. It is not just the United States that wishes to make little of bilateral security cooperation with Cuba on illegal immigration, anti-narcotics, Guantánamo security, natural disasters, and the rest, for Havana as well, even if to a lesser degree, it is important that these things not be too well known if the branding of the United States as the enemy is to make sense.

Most Latin American armed forces also regrettably, like their governments and security forces in general, have a reputation for widespread *corruption*. This also differs greatly from country to country with Chile at one extreme and perhaps Peru or Paraguay on the other.³⁹ Part of this corruption is very old indeed, the tradition of corrupt security forces going back well into colonial days. In the face of low pay, few allowances, and poor prestige, the military on occasion follow their police colleagues into illegal activities. The vast range of responsibilities the forces have in countries where the state is so weak means that the opportunities for corruption tend to be vast, the consequences of getting caught not excessive, the advantages immense, and institutional "cover" against punishment likely to be not only available but also highly effective. But part of this corruption is also new or has at least taken on a different face. Because this context, when added to the growth of international crime, the drug traffic, trafficking in persons, and the rest of the sad litany of expanded illegality of recent years, has meant that many more officers have given way to temptation.

The FAR have not been exempt from this. The Ochoa trial brought this out as early as 1989. And a number of sackings of senior officers since then have underscored the fact that Cuba, despite the revolutionary traditions of its security forces, is not immune to corrupting influences. And if the illegal drugs trade has been the main culprit in seducing officials, access to controlling positions in industry has also had a role to play. The difference seems to be that in Cuba justice for the guilty has been swift and exemplary. This contrasts with what prevails in most Latin American countries, where the military *fuero* often means officers can only be tried in military courts by their peers. In other cases impunity is so established for military officers that there is simply no real fear of getting caught, or if so, of being brought to trial and convicted. In addition, the scale and breadth of corruption in some cases are so vast that the guilty know that a clean-up campaign is virtually impossible without bringing the whole institution, or even the state as a whole, into discredit, which is more than crusading governments are willing to undertake.

None of this seems to apply in Cuba with any force. There has not been any sort of military *fuero* in Cuba since the Revolution and even

before it was limited by Latin American standards. Officers can and are tried in civil courts for civil offences and even more important their behavior is carefully controlled within the military system. Impunity for the armed forces, in the full Latin American sense, does not exist in Cuba although there are institutional privileges of importance. If caught, officers of even senior rank are most likely to be brought to trial and convicted. And just as important, they know it. Finally, corruption, while doubtless there, is not felt to be widespread as yet in the forces and this means that the institution retains an ability to move against those guilty of it in ways only dreamt of by those trying to reform more tainted institutions in the rest of the region. It remains to be seen if the FAR can continue with their surprisingly good record in this field.

The state of *physical fitness* in the armed forces is also one that has caused much comment on what some feel is a nearly general Latin American problem. Long years of peace, isolated garrisons, privileged officers, lack of proper physical training programs, climatic conditions, long-standing practices, and many other factors can tend to produce the kind of caricature many have of the overweight, mustachioed, dark Latin American officer so often portrayed in older (and even some recent) photographs of some of the region's militaries.

This problem is of course also connected to the question of age. In a tradition closely modeled on that of the countries of Southern Europe, many Latin American forces retain their officers for longer periods of service than would be normal in the NATO, U.S., or British Commonwealth traditions. This has changed of late but continues to apply in a number of armed forces of the region.

In Cuba fitness has an extraordinary place in public life. Sports at school are taken much more seriously than in most of Latin America. And as shown by Cuba's exceptional performance in international sporting events, prowess is widespread, well appreciated by both public opinion and the state, and encouraged at every level. This carries on into the army where the "previa" basic training program gives considerable importance to physical training, where sporting events are frequent, and where at no time is the physical condition of personnel forgotten by commanders.

This produces an army of surprising fitness as has been witnessed by many observers. Troops tend to be in good shape. But this is generally the case in other Latin American armed forces among young conscripts who are after all selected in a process that includes medical testing and who are also by definition *young*. What is more striking is that officers, senior NCOs, and professional soldiers tend to be fit as well, even most senior officers. And while there are of course exceptions,

especially among senior and older officers and NCOs, the majority situation is clearly better than in most Latin American forces. This situation is improving in many of these other countries' forces but it does appear that Cuba has a distinct edge here.

On the other hand, there are certainly a great many *older officers* still serving in the FAR. Indeed, the most senior command levels often give the impression of great age. And while this is better than in the recent past, there is still a distance to go. Much of this state of affairs merely reflects the desire to keep historic figures in uniform and does not mean that these older officers are holding real command positions. But it is an observable fact that many individual senior officers are older even than those usually found in most other Latin American armed forces.

The last element worth discussing is the time-honored but highly damaging Latin American tradition of "acato pero no cumplo."⁴⁰ This refers to the long-standing reaction of colonial officers to orders from on high and usually from the metropolis. Instead of obeying such orders in a military manner, instinctively and rapidly, local commanders, knowing they are far from headquarters, would acknowledge these orders but would not comply or implement them. That is, they would not carry them out. Needless to say, proper attention to many of these orders would damage the advantages these local military "bosses" obtained from what were often personal fiefdoms, wherein they represented the firmest traditions of the exploitative state. Thus, from the times of the *conquistadores*, there set in a practice of receiving the order and of acknowledging it without the slightest intention of applying even its letter much less its spirit.

This certainly existed in Cuba as well in colonial times and in the years of the pseudo-Republic. Indeed, it was highly visible and considered by some to be particularly Cuban in officials not only of the old armed forces but also of government in general.⁴¹ But it does not appear to have had a happy time among the "barbudos" of Fidel's army in the Sierra Maestra or on its way to the cities. Fidel, Che, and Raúl were firm disciplinarians fully aware that the Revolution could not achieve victory without unity, hierarchy, discipline, and full obedience to orders. In the transformation of that force into the FAR this tradition appears to be as firmly entrenched as ever. If anything Cuban officers may be a little too prone to unquestioning obedience rather than the reverse. History has taught them to be this way. Thus, in this further element common to many Latin American armed forces, the Cuban is once more the odd man out.

Hence, it can be said that the FAR are both a Latin American armed force and a distinctly Cuban one with many generally applicable

Latin American features not theirs. The result is distinct and impressive. It is not surprising that most Cubans are impressed with their armed services and that they are joined in that appreciation by most military attachés posted into the country.

But What Does this Mean for the Transition?

Summing up all this as to what it might mean in any future transition, this highly original force does not have a tradition of "deliberation" as an institution. This is odd when one thinks of all the officers who take part regularly in debates within the Party structure, who study national problems, who are involved in decisions on directions for the economy, and who are well educated and concerned.⁴² Thus, personal deliberation is well anchored in the officer corps but so is military discipline. Therefore, there is little room for institutional deliberation among those in uniform.

The FAR do have a strong sense of corporate values and of their own worth but that does not spill over into ill feelings toward political leaders in general and certainly not in any visible way into negative reactions to the commander-in-chief. We have also observed that the army is more than in the recent past by far the *primus inter pares* of the FAR but that this does not translate into major problems of interservice rivalry. It has been clear that the internal security role, while acknowledged, is far from central to FAR perceptions of their job even if it is there in the background.

There is little Prussianism but much professionalism in the FAR. And while there is vast experience abroad that experience is wearing thin and not being replenished. We have seen as well that the FAR are coming closer to the Latin American model these days when it comes to prestige-oriented sophisticated weapons in small numbers combined with generally outdated "kit" in larger quantities. The difference here is that this situation is imposed by current constraints rather than tradition.

The FAR are *a* school of the nation not *the* school of the nation, as in some other parts of the region. The national educational system and the many mobilizing elements of state and society ensure that the armed forces are not alone in trying to mold youth in the image the state desires to see. We have also seen that the role of the United States where the FAR are concerned is not in any way comparable to the norm.

On corruption and impunity the FAR have scored high marks indeed. But the recent exposure to temptation has had its risks for the institution and a number of senior and even junior personnel have

found the pull too great, especially in the particular circumstances of the Special Period. This is a potentially major issue.

There are fitness issues in the FAR but they are few and far between. Age is a more important issue but even that is under control. The forces are overall fit and surprisingly youthful but in the Cuban population, as a result in large part of the spectacular medical successes of the Revolution, society as a whole is ageing more quickly than in the next of Latin America. In a society where sexual activity begins in general at an early age, there is justifiable concern about irresponsible parental conduct in terms of rearing children. In addition, it must be said that 43 percent of all families in Cuba are headed by the mother and that in the capital this figure ascends sharply to well over half.⁴³ Thus the government has reason for worry with an absence of the father from a vast number of households and from the lives of a vast number of young males. But for the FAR, the main issue is of course the age of the male population in particular. For the moment the forces do not even require the number of young men reaching military service age to actually do that service. But trends are not favorable. This once again is far from the Latin American norm of a very high percentage of young people in the future population.

The FAR do not practice much in the way of "acato pero no cumpla." It is unlikely to go away as a tradition but it should be noted that both the temptations of the new system and the personal needs of personnel make it possible that this will change.

This kind of disciplined and hierarchical force, loyal to its chain of command and highly professional, has done impressive things in the past and is showing itself capable of doing the same today and almost certainly also in the future. But the strains of a transition could be even more daunting than those of today. The FAR's personnel are frustrated on a number of scores even if as an institution they show distinct loyalty. As discussed earlier, they are frustrated by some important bottlenecks in promotion brought about in large part by the cuts of the early 1990s. They are disappointed at no longer having the sophisticated tools they once had to do their job. They are upset by the loss of chances to prove themselves professionally abroad and to gain real experience off the island. And they are often annoyed with conditions of work, pay, advancement, training, and much else.

Junior officers are more frustrated than their seniors, and other ranks from the cities are probably the most frustrated of all. Conscription is accepted by society but there is little keenness among urban youth to take part in military service. The lack of equipment, interesting training, and posting experience is damaging to morale. The slowness of promotions is galling to professionals. The unending

drudgery of garrison life without so many important elements of proper training can be numbing. Frustrations do not bubble over outside family and military communities. There is considerable tolerance for loyal officers who vent their frustrations without questioning the system as a whole. These frustrations tend to be shared among the members of the military community, as is the case in Cuban society as a whole, and this means that it is far less dangerous to have them aired than might at first appear.

The handling of the transition is going to be crucial. Again, it is no wonder that Fidel has wanted his own brother at the helm of the vital armed forces not only at previous times of crisis but also for the future. There is some reference in the press and in public to the idea that the Revolution will not be shaken seriously at the passing of Fidel or indeed at the passing of both Castro brothers. But it is the FAR that in the end must see that this is indeed the case. MININT is an improved security apparatus now, but it is lightly armed, lacks prestige and tradition, and is not in any way in the same league with the FAR. The Party has made important improvements and in particular has rejuvenated its leadership to a degree many thought impossible. But it does not have much legitimacy with youth although still some with the older generation.

It is clear from the above, and the other points made in this book, that only the armed forces have the means to hold the ring in a transition. Another equally firm fact is that they would have the will to do so. A final fact related to the other two is that they would have every patriotic, professional, and institutional reason and intention so to do. No Party, CDR, MININT, State Security, or other element of the Cuban State can make these claims. And so those who argue that the FAR must therefore be *a* central player in any transition are only partially right. The fact is that in any scenario this author can foresee, they would be *the* key player.

Chapter 9

The Military Defense of Cuba: But Can the FAR still Deter?

In the plethora of new taskings, new responsibilities, and new or expanded roles taken on in the Special Period by the FAR, it is easy to forget that its chief responsibility remains the deterrence of invasion. The FAR do not of course forget this. Nor do they forget that while *La Guerra de Todo el Pueblo* is, as a strategy, far from its earlier real potential to function, nonetheless it remains the basic defense of the nation. And that strategy proposes of course that if deterrence fails, it remains for the FAR as regular armed forces, and the reserve forces of both the *Ejército de Trabajo Juvenil* and the *Milicias Territoriales*, to *defeat* that invasion if launched.

The United States Challenge Today

When the *Guerra de Todo el Pueblo* was announced in the early 1980s, President Reagan, repeatedly sworn to “roll back” communism during his election campaign, was on his way to the White House. Indeed, the new plan was in many ways a reaction to the rhetoric and military buildup of the early Reagan period and the long period of electioneering that preceded it. Harshly critical of the slight *apertura* of the early Carter years, Reagan broke off virtually all public initiatives aiming at better relations with Havana.¹ Indeed, his policies in Central America and elsewhere announced a “zero tolerance” with many pillars of Cuban foreign and defense policy. Castro understood the meaning of the new state of affairs and, being a pragmatist, pulled in his horns on a number of issues of importance to Havana earlier on.

Cuba was at this time, however, in a very special relationship, bordering on the status of an alliance, with the second greatest power in the world. Indeed, with the advent of “Mutual Assured Destruction” (MAD)

in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it could be argued that Cuba was safer than ever. The U.S. "assurance" that it would not invade Cuba, issued after the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, while hardly foolproof, did seem to be in place. Soviet cooperation, especially in defense, had never been greater. And MAD seemed to suggest that the era of real potential for a nuclear conflict was at an end and that Cuba could expect to profit from that mutual standoff.

In addition, as we see in other chapters of this book, Cuba's isolation of the 1960s was coming to an end, and many of the achievements of the Revolution were there to be seen by all willing to acknowledge them. Fidel was in his mid-fifties and was fit and healthy. And one could be forgiven for thinking that the addition of the GTP would add sufficient deterrent to the Cuban defense posture to make Reagan rhetoric remain just that. The *Guerra de Todo el Pueblo* could be added as yet another pillar of a series of diplomatic and military arrangements that made Cuba a significant player on the international stage and one not easily bullied by anyone. Fidel could be justly proud of the groundwork he had long striven to lay in both diplomatic and defense terms that allowed him to implement his new strategy and add it to his quiver of deterrent-producing arrows.²

The United States was certainly in a bellicose mood. But the USSR was not a minor player and through its research efforts on modern weapons MAD had become a reality. Moscow certainly did not match Washington in military potential, except in the strictly numbers game of the Central NATO front. But it could so clearly do unacceptable damage to the United States in a nuclear war that MAD came to apply despite U.S. superiority in virtually all spheres of weapons and military potential.

The FAR also had never been in better shape. Even before the new strategy came into play, the regular force and reserves made Cuba the most "militarized" country in Latin America and the most impressively armed. Soviet equipment and weapons, added to a vast array of training opportunities for Cuban forces personnel, had been available to Havana for some 20 years and had more than begun to show their results. The FAR were professional, hardworking, efficient, well armed, well trained, well organized, and fit to fight. Angola and other operations had proven the truth of this statement, as U.S. and South African sources make clear.³

The air force flew close to first-rate jet aircraft and had achieved considerable tactical and some more limited strategic "lift." The navy deployed relatively new missile patrol craft as well as submarines, landing ships, mine warfare vessels, and a host of smaller craft aimed at harassing landings at key and vulnerable moments, but some of which

were able to operate more widely and give Cuba some at least of the attributes of a “blue water navy.” The army was large, mechanized, and clearly deployable across the land and in significant numbers abroad as well, especially if Havana and Moscow agreed on objectives and Soviet strategic assets could be made available to the FAR for transport and logistics.⁴

And Today?

It must be said that very little indeed of this strategic situation remains today. And the changes are almost all extremely negative for the FAR. The United States is no longer one of two superpowers. It stands alone as *the* superpower. Not only is Russia no longer a major actor on the international scene but the United States has reinforced a position of strategic unipolarity not seen since Rome. The drive for Mrs. Thatcher’s “peace dividend” has meant that alongside this disappearance of the Soviet Union has appeared an acceptance by second-rank powers of the absolute strategic hegemony of the United States. And if frequently unhappy over this or that issue, they do not cast that displeasure in terms of the need for a challenge to the world leader but appear rather to keep their powder dry for major issues of dispute (such as international trade), where the stakes are massive. To do otherwise would mean to risk being seen as no longer a loyal friend of the United States with all that such status would mean in the new strategic context. As we have seen in the Iraq War of 2003, and notably in the diplomacy surrounding it, there are few willing to take that risk over the short term and fewer still over the long term.⁵

The Impact of New Players—China and Vietnam

China certainly shows some limited signs of taking its power potential more seriously in the future. But all manner of problems, ranging from domestic responsibilities to financial and technological restraints, have meant that China’s *relative* power position has not necessarily been strengthened and may possibly have actually been reduced since 1989, but in whichever case, it has certainly not gained significantly in relative power terms. Indeed, the ability of the U.S. government to use the “China card” to scare up more resources for defense within its own body politic has meant that important issues, such as Taiwanese defense and independence, or even Ballistic Missile Defense for the United States, end up reducing Chinese relative power at a time when it should logically be increasing. Beijing is still unable to project

significant power overseas and it is unclear when this will change in any major way.

Thus, the relatively comfortable bipolar world into which Cuba inserted itself with such dramatic results in the early 1960s, switching from a direct and close ally of the United States in the Western hemisphere to an indirect "ally" of its greatest rival the Soviet Union, is gone. For Cuba, there is little flexibility and no chance of counterpoise in any real sense for the giant to the north.⁶ No state is willing to risk U.S. anger in a major way over Cuba. It could be argued that the Soviet Union was not either earlier on, and merely engaged in propaganda over Cuba without risking real conflict with Washington; however, it was at least true that even the United States considered Cuba to be somehow in the Soviet bloc and that it was well understood in the United States that an invasion of the island could have serious repercussions.

While maintaining correct diplomatic contacts with the island, allies and friends of the United States accept that their hands are tied in terms of major initiatives in favor of the Cubans. They generally disapprove of U.S. policy but do not make that disapproval very public. This is discussed elsewhere in this book but even here one should not overstate the case. Most allies find it extremely difficult to work too closely with Fidel's Cuba in any case, given its dismal record in basic human rights. And this drawback is merely exacerbated by the opposition of the United States to any such arrangements on the part of its friends who will, as usual today, be likely to be judged on the increasingly frequent criterion of "you are with us or against us."

Thus there is simply no major friend or ally of Cuba out there. China sends the odd military or mixed visiting team to Cuba, but despite some small levels of cooperation, little is actually done to help in defense. In the years before the Sino-Soviet split of the late 1950s, there was commonality to much Chinese and Soviet weapons and equipment. But this has been much less the case for several decades. Thus, what might have been a major source for spare parts and ammunition is much less so, given the source of the bulk of Cuban stocks. China is not a country with vast amounts of relevant defense assistance available for Cuba, while Cuba's needs are extensive indeed. And as seen earlier, Vietnam would like to help within reason, but is constrained by a number of factors, not least of which is probably a desire to avoid any potential for annoying Washington. Thus the slight assistance mentioned exists but is unlikely to be transformed into the kind or quantity the FAR so badly need.

That having been said, China and Vietnam are beyond doubt the most important players in the defense field for Cuba. While assistance

is really on a very small scale, at least there is some. And there is at least some very limited training assistance given, especially it would appear, by the Vietnamese. The comings and goings of official military missions of these two countries are regularly reported in "Granma" and other state newspapers and continue to at least give the impression that "we are not alone." Converting those connections into something decisive for the FAR has proven to be the sticking point. There is for both these countries relatively little potential gain, and quite impressive potential danger, in too close a relationship with Cuba at a time when the United States is seen as sensitive on such matters. It is thus likely that the levels of defence assistance Havana can expect from these two countries will continue to be meager.

This could change, of course. Taiwan is very active in the Caribbean and especially the Central American countries. China is often unable to compete with the trade, investment and assistance potential Taipei can deploy. Cuba could eventually become interesting in this context as a major state with special political potential and one where Taiwan is seen as anathema. But for the moment there is little sign of such a status for the island where real Chinese strategic priorities are concerned.

And the Russians Today?

No Western country has dared contemplate sales of defence equipment or weapons to Cuba for decades. Even the slightest possibility of "double-use" accusations keeps firms wary. Potential U.S. annoyance on such issues is such as to deter the very thought. Nor can Cuba afford Western materiel, especially if bought with convertible foreign exchange, and with no special credit features. Thus despite the irony, Havana still turns to Moscow for some small degree of assistance and purchase of such items. The level is small indeed because even though barter has a special place in Russian–Cuban economic relations again after so many years, Cuba can afford little from abroad even under the best circumstances.

This system was greatly affected by the closure of the Lourdes tracking facility in 2001. Despite the changes of recent years in the utility of the station for the Russians, it had proved of great value to Cuba. As is well known the some \$200 million of annual payments the Cuban state got from Moscow for the continued use of the site meant a great deal to Havana even though it was well short of the \$1 billion asked of Moscow by the Cubans during the early 1990s negotiations to keep the facility open.⁷ Indeed, it is difficult to exaggerate the setback that the closure of the facility represented for the Cuban economy. But for the FAR the reverse was much greater.

As in some other places in the world, so in Cuba, the former Soviet military intelligence arrangements between the two countries were felt to be especially valuable to Russian intelligence well after the end of the cold war. Watching what the Americans were doing was infinitely easier from Cuba than it was from Russian installations. And while of course much could be done from space, Cuba's location so close to Florida and to U.S. military and space facilities there meant that Lourdes constituted automatically a special window into what the United States was doing. But these linkages were much more valuable for the Cuban military and other security services during the Special Period than for the Russians.

Despite the end of the cold war, Cubans were still in daily contact with many officers of the Russian armed forces with whom they often had nearly career length ties. Exchanges of views and information under these circumstances were inevitable. In addition, some elements of support in one form or another of course slipped through despite the official requirement for great care to be taken in order not to annoy Washington. Cubans got some intelligence, and some limited access to defense stocks in the Russian homeland, as a result of these ties.

The end of Lourdes has dealt a heavy blow to what was seen by both intelligence services as a possibility of continuing at least some of the highly profitable cooperation in place before 1989. But for the moment this seems far too much to hope. There are now vastly fewer immediate opportunities for Cuba's armed forces to have access to Russian thinking, but also Russian sources on any number of matters of interest to Havana. And given that the FAR are so relatively "blind" as a result of other matters discussed here such as the reductions in embassy staffs and military attaché posts, the lack of funds to ensure access to publications or Internet, the vast reduction in people going abroad for training or service; this blow has been particularly hurtful. The financial impact of the loss of \$200 million is also difficult to exaggerate but in the long run for the FAR the loss of long-standing contacts, already massively weakened since 1989, may well prove to be even more hurtful.

Thus again it seems that while it is not true to say the Cuba is formally "isolated," since its formal connections with the rest of the world have never been as complete as today it is true that it is proving extremely difficult for Cuba to convert that integration at the formal level into profitable cooperation at working levels. And it is, among others, the FAR that feel this pinch at the professional level. There are simply no easy sources of supply for the Cuban armed forces in either weaponry or equipment. And the same is true for those elements, even ammunition, on which armed forces depend entirely in order to

conduct serious training. Luckily for the FAR specialization within the socialist world did not mean that Cuba abandoned entirely the production of its own ammunition and there appear to have been reasonable stocks as the shocks of the early 1990s hit. But production at home is hard hit like most of the rest of the economy and other products have had the priority, especially those to ensure nutritional and health levels necessary for the population.

In essence the FAR have had to fall back on their own resources, and resourcefulness, in the face of sustained crisis and only limited Chinese and Vietnamese willingness and ability to assist. There has been some training with the Vietnamese. But there is little information on what kind it was and is except that it is based on the perceived need of a country like Cuba, using GTP as a basic strategy, to learn from a country which is known to have had such success with something vaguely similar against a vastly superior enemy. Domingo Amuchástegui suggests, almost certainly correctly, that Cuba has received Vietnamese advisers.⁸ But these do not appear to have been very numerous or to have had much direct impact on the Cuban forces. On the other hand, a number of Vietnamese works on defense have been translated and used by military training establishments on the island.

Cuba was of course disengaging from its own troublesome commitments just as the Soviet Union was doing with its. And while the links between the two disengagements were obvious given Havana's military dependence on the USSR, it is also true that Cuba itself saw little gain and much potential risk for its own interests in carrying on with policies so little related to the realities surrounding the island. The FAR arguably was now to have much less in the way of international commitments than at any time since the 1959 victory. Thus when the Special Period was declared, the FAR were in a better position to respond to the challenge than would have been the case earlier on. Shorn of major commitments the forces could concentrate on the domestic challenges posed by the shocks of the time and not be forced to engage in expensive, difficult, and complex operations abroad and training of foreigners at home. The negotiated end of the Namibian entanglement was in that sense a godsend.

Today's Military Defense

We have seen how the FAR reacted to the new times. It is now possible to discuss to what degree this new context has affected its ability to provide for a defense of the island if challenged, and to maintain a proper deterrence posture in order to make that horrendous challenge

more unlikely. What then is the current nature of threat perception? This author would like to suggest that the view dominant in Havana is essentially that the following elements exist, with various degrees of seriousness:

- the possibility of an invasion of the long-planned for kind, involving a U.S. military attack aimed at the overthrow of the Castro government and the establishment of a pro-U.S. regime in its stead;
- the possibility of an invasion brought on as a means of halting chaos on the island in the wake of dramatic political and economic change there;
- the possibility of deeply deteriorated relations between the two countries as a result of Cuban incapacity to deal with issues the United States sees as central to its security such as drugs, terrorism, or illegal immigration.

This requires elaboration. Each one of these possibilities is analyzed, as it applies in Havana today.

The "Traditional" Invasion Scenarios

As we have seen earlier, the FAR have been preparing for an invasion of this type since early on in the life of the Castro government. When late 1959 saw a restructuring of the Rebel Army in the light of events in the Caribbean and deteriorating relations with the United States over the direction the Revolution was taking, the new FAR immediately was given two main orientations. It would defeat U.S. inspired insurgency at home, and would do the same to the United States or U.S.-directed exile invasions coming from that country or Central American or Caribbean states allied to it.

Envisaged in the case of full scale invasion was a series of landings on the island's coasts accompanied by major air strikes and parachute drops. These troops would seek to rapidly take over key installations in Cuba seizing communications and infrastructural elements necessary for the island to organize its defense effectively. Airports, air bases, seaports and naval bases, concentration points, transport and communication centers would all be first-line targets for these attacks. Cuba's tiny air force and navy would be neutralized early on through air and naval assault.

A puppet government would be set up with help from the exile community in the United States and it would quickly act, with recognition from the United States, to give legitimacy to the invasion and to brand regular government forces as outlaw elements. Order would

quickly be reestablished on the basis of overwhelming force, as in almost all previous operations of this kind conducted in Central America and the Caribbean over the last century. In the case of an exile "invasion," this would be rather different. In cooperation with local anti-Castro guerrilla elements, a landing would take place in a relatively isolated part of Cuba leading to the seizure of a town where a "government" could be established, which would quickly call on the United States for help if its own call for rebellion against Castro failed to spark sufficient support.

From the FAR perspective both were likely to, in essence, mean war with the United States although political factors could mean that the full weight of U.S. power did not come into play and thus make resistance nearly impossible. Even in the event of an exile attack it was assumed that this would be more of a mask for U.S. intervention than a real initiative on the part of the divided and incoherent organizations in Miami and other parts of the United States.⁹ There was little real concern that such groups could mount any serious attempt against as well established and popular a regime as Fidel Castro's in these early years. But there was never any doubt that the U.S. militarily could most certainly mount such an invasion and that it would be foolish indeed not to take that threat seriously. The United States had never been defeated in such an effort in its long history of intervention in the region, and the fledgling Cuban armed forces of the early years could hardly be considered a match for the greatest power on earth acting in its infamous "backyard."

In the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961, much of what had been feared did occur and much did not. As seen earlier, U.S. support after President Kennedy had acted to rework the invasion plan fell off dramatically. The exile forces were thus asked to do much more than previously planned. And instead of having direct U.S. logistics, naval, and air force support on a large scale, and being assured of access too much more as needed, the CIA-organized exiles were in many ways left to their own devices. In the context of a plan based on the most absurdly optimistic analyses of the strength of the anti-Castro forces and sentiment on the island, disaster was virtually certain.

On the other hand, the myth of U.S. invincibility could act powerfully to overawe Cuban forces and, as so often in the past and future, allow smaller and less impressive forces to overcome the regular army. Thus Castro had to act quickly and effectively to defeat the invasion if he intended to avoid the worst. Exile and U.S. mismanagement did the rest.

This experience did not of course put the FAR at rest. Rather, the opposite was the result. There was little feeling that the United States

would simply accept the defeat and what Cubans came to call "Imperialism's First Defeat in the Americas." Instead, there was an analysis made which suggested that the United States would likely now wish to use direct military action by its own forces to finish the job. The reactions this led to in the FAR have already been touched on in terms of the reinforcement of the forces, the growth of assistance provided by the USSR, and the organization of a vast reserve force.

Since that date the central role of the FAR has been a continuation of the deterrence of such an invasion or its defeat. All defense planning was predicated on this central threat, which still exists not only as part of Cuban state-inspired "mythology" but also as the reason for real preparation for resistance. However, there is little left of the day-to-day operational impact of this central threat. It is clear to the FAR's leadership that neither the U.S. military nor much of the U.S. establishment is keen on an adventure such as the military overthrow of the Castro government. Not only are the scars of 1961 still deep, but U.S. military analyses of such an operation show all the problems the Cubans have planned to present to be still there, even though at a lower level of defense efficiency than before the Special Period. The Pentagon has thus been under little illusion that Cuba would resist, or that at least many Cubans would do so. Of central importance, U.S. casualties, even with overwhelming force deployed, would probably still be heavy.

They would certainly be heavier than would be warranted for the political gain likely to be achieved. Washington is much more interested in seeing what is so often called "the rotten fruit" merely fall to the ground rather than doing much to shake the tree in costly and potentially dangerous ways. Military force with heavy casualties seems the least interesting option available to get rid of Castro.

The FAR of course realize this only too well. Thus, the maintenance of the deterrent role of the armed forces as a means to reinforce this already existing tendency in key U.S. circles makes excellent sense. We will come back to this point later. Here, it is necessary to emphasize that the FAR have not been taking this central threat very seriously up to a very recent point in time. This is as a result of all these points as well as a certain pride in their ability to produce effective forces that have every reason to deter a U.S. attack, and make it very sensible for Washington to indeed think twice before embarking on such an adventure.

This is changing now. Cubans, and military officers in particular, are more and more willing to take seriously the possibility of a U.S. attack. After all, the United States has gone to war four times in a little

over a decade, over matters (Iraq I, Serbia, Afghanistan, Iraq II) arguably less important to the United States than “settling” the Cuban issue once and for all. The rhetoric of the Right in the Bush government has also been very much on the rise of late and the Cuban issue is more and more often being put into the basket of security issues the United States is facing, this at a time when security is the priority in Washington.¹⁰ That is, there is a clever move taking place whereby those with a stake in “settling” the issue of Cuban defiance of the U.S. place the island’s relationship with the superpower in the context of the latter’s security. This is done by emphasizing supposed Cuban links to international terrorism, drug trafficking, improper use of nuclear facilities, and weapons of mass destruction as reasons to, once again, consider the island a threat.

In this sense, the Pentagon’s view, discussed at length above, is vital for Cuba. One must retain the perspective in the Department of Defense (DoD) that this is not the case, that Cuba remains a threat only if the present government is unable to control domestic dissent and thus sends hordes of illegal immigrants northward. If this changes, and the DoD begins to feel that Cuba is indeed a threat, then there is every reason to fear military initiatives to deal with it.

Obviously U.S. difficulties in Iraq, and to some extent in Afghanistan, will act as a limiting factor on those wishing to settle militarily the Cuban defiance problem. But these hindrances to U.S. power may slacken at any time and neither clear-cut victory nor continued obstacles to the exercise of U.S. strength elsewhere is guaranteed to act to slow its deployment to the immediate south. Some will argue that the problems being encountered abroad make it more necessary, not less, to secure the southern flank. Others will say that solving other issues satisfactorily opens the way to doing the same in the northern Caribbean Sea.

In the context of a U.S. debate of this kind, and given the uncertain evolution of political events on the island itself, it seems clear that it is in Cuba’s interest to retain forces able to add a further dimension to that discussion. That is, the FAR must be able to continue to act as a force capable of causing significant damage to any invading force. It must thereby give support to those in the United States who will be arguing against the military option in Cuba. But that support can only come from an ability on the part of the FAR to put up a good defense.

It is the second scenario that has been taken much more seriously by the FAR in the recent past. Because it is the second scenario, disorder in Cuba as a result of the strains of the Special Period, or because of the incapacitation or death of Fidel, is seen as much more likely over the next years, or at least was so until very recently. Cuba,

as has been seen throughout this book, is suffering greatly and has done so for over fifteen years now. Few on the island imagined such a long period of disaster and such a terribly slow recovery even though key economists made it clear early on that the road to recovery would likely be both long and terribly bumpy.

The "Habanazo" of 1994 has been referred to at several times. Much changed as a result, as we have seen already. The FAR have distanced themselves even more from formal internal security duties while the PNR and MININT have been reinforced. At the same time, the central role of the FAR in any transition can be seen here. Because even if MININT is stronger and more capable of dealing with disorder (thus ensuring to the degree possible that the FAR are not themselves asked to do so directly), MININT now *belongs* to the FAR. And this means that even if the FAR are slightly more removed from the problem of internal order under current arrangements, they are still most definitely responsible for such order in the final analysis.¹¹ This is of course true for virtually all countries but it is especially telling here.

If for any reason the combination of PNR, MININT, and FAR capabilities, in addition to the not inconsiderable influence of the CDRs and State Security, are not able to keep the lid on such disturbances as might arise, and if these disturbances become important, anything is possible. Another "balsero crisis," but this time larger and with bloodshed in the streets as its backdrop, would be absolutely critical for the governments of both countries. From the perspective of this author, it is virtually unimaginable to think of the United States standing by while there is widespread disorder or even fighting in the streets of Cuba's major cities.

It is worth recalling that U.S. intervention in 1898 used the pretext of disorder and Spain's inability to maintain domestic peace as the *casus belli* for war.¹² President McKinley made it clear that the United States could simply not wait for others to slowly and perhaps not so surely reestablish order on an island so close to its shores. If the security forces of Cuba, in this case serving a government much less loved in the United States than was that of Spain in 1898, cannot keep order, Washington would have much more than a pretext to intervene. It could claim to be acting on the basis of humanitarian motives. And the mass immigration issue that would almost certainly present itself, mentioned repeatedly in recent Pentagon documents on Cuba, would merely be another element pressing strongly for intervention.

This nightmare scenario for the FAR must be taken seriously by them even though, as one might imagine, they tend to prefer to think of other things. Till recently it was considered simply much more likely

that any invasion of Cuba in the future would take place under the circumstances of internal disorder rather than as a traditional attack to unseat the Castro government. This now needs to be assessed in the context of a Washington willing to brook much less opposition from Castro than in the past and more likely to consider seriously an attack on the island if certain circumstances present themselves. But it is still felt in most circles that over the long run the disorder scenario is a more likely one. It is no surprise that the Pentagon has shown itself wise in suggesting that while the Castro government should go, it should not go in crisis, blood, and vast migrations. If the Pentagon feels this way, the thoughts of the FAR are not difficult to imagine.

What is the Current Strategy?

In the context of all the above, Cuban strategy is rather straightforward. Havana seeks to ensure that the traditional threat of invasion can be deterred as fully as possible. But given the until recently low likelihood of such a scenario coming into play, the FAR have been asked to assist in avoiding confrontation through their activities in assistance to the national recovery effort. Only if that recovery is successful can one hope to maintain the lid on illegal emigration. Only if it is successful can one hope to maintain domestic order in the long run. And thus only if it is successful can the United States be kept away from the temptation to intervene militarily on the island in order to ensure its security interests are protected.

These wider issues then translate into the secondary roles, which in the end become primary. That is, the effort to control illegal emigration and to reduce to a minimum the illegal drug traffic are made in large part to prove to the United States that Cuba is doing more than its share as a good neighbor to keep both those problems to a minimum for Washington. This is not in any way to suggest that Cuba does not fight the drug trade for its own reasons of wishing to control the arrival of such substances to the Cuban population. It is rather to say that the international affairs dimension, and in particular the U.S.–Cuba bilateral relations dimension, of this effort is very much in the fore in FAR considerations of the priority this role should have.

On the thorny issue of how to deal with newer trends in Washington, those related to branding Cuba yet again a security threat, the possible Cuban responses are not so obvious. The armed forces are not in any way in as good shape as they had been until the Special Period began. They are obviously not as able to deter the United States as they once were, not only because there is no longer a Soviet military connection or because they are so much smaller than before, but also

because the United States is now so immeasurably more powerful than it was before the fall of the Soviet Union. Cuba does not have the means for a major effort to beef up its forces, in either numerical or technological terms. But it is only too aware that its ability to deter the United States in traditional terms is reduced at this time when the dangers are greater than for many years in the past. There is no easy answer to these challenges.

How Does this Translate in Military Terms?

The FAR have adjusted well to their priority roles, given the shattering effects of the Special Period for them as well. The massive cuts in budgets, personnel, training, equipment and weapons procurement, and operations occasioned by the disasters of a dozen and more years ago have of course hit hard. And as we have seen throughout this book, many measures have had to be undertaken to address these problems keeping in mind old and new priorities for Cuban defense. Thirteen years later, the FAR have seemingly stabilized to a considerable degree. The *Ejército Juvenil de Trabajo*, celebrating its thirtieth anniversary in 2003, is doing a fair job of contributing to the harvest and to the expansion of the military role in agricultural areas other than sugar. In addition, the armed forces appear able to feed themselves and that is an enormous contribution to national recovery in and of itself.

The probable strength of the regular force (all ranks) stands at some 55,000, and there is no reason to refuse to work with these figures. In addition to the regular force, there are thousands more in the MININT and there is also the smaller *Tropas Guarda Fronteras*.¹³ Needless to say, this is a far cry from the some 297,000 often accepted as the strength of the institution as late as 1991. As we have noted several times already in this book, the extent to which the FAR have shown their flexibility in responding to the crisis without ever losing sight of both their historic deterrence and defense mission or of their absolute requirement to assist foreign policy to ensure the U.S. relationship does not go off the rails entirely is remarkable. But doing all this with 55,000 personnel and the equipment and weaponry currently available is simply not the same thing as doing it with several times that strength in personnel and with an enviable equipment and weaponry stock.

The Army and Deterrence

As elsewhere in Latin America, it is on the land force that the bulk of the defense of the realm falls. It is the army that represents most of the

total regular armed forces. It is also the army that must sustain the lion's share of the vital mobilization effort if called for, and which must maintain the great majority of the infrastructure of such an effort during the long years when it is not called for. And it is the army that would have the main role in assisting with aid to the civil power if disorder broke out.

In addition, in the last resort it is the army and its reserves that would have to provide the vast majority of national defense in case of invasion not only on the beaches and landing grounds but in the planned withdrawal toward a more protracted defense envisaged in *La Guerra de Todo el Pueblo*. Thus, it is the army that gets the largest share of the defense budget. The rebel forces that took Havana in January 1959, which conducted the war against Batista that led to its victory, were an army. They had in effect neither an air force nor a navy. And while there were elements of the Batista navy that were revolutionary and indeed conducted the dramatic rising in November 1957 at the Cienfuegos naval base, this did not mean there was an anti-Batista naval force of any kind.¹⁴ Indeed, as we have seen, there had been no revolutionary tradition at all in the pre-1959 maritime force.

Indeed, it is only in the context of World War II that one can speak of something resembling a real, if small, navy at the disposal of the Cuban state. And that force was exclusively the result of U.S. naval cooperation and training. The provision of all ships to the Cuban navy was through special conditions from the U.S. navy under Lend-Lease provisions during the war or the Mutual Assistance Pact from the early 1950s on. Such a force was unlikely to be excessively revolutionary in orientation and indeed was not, the rising in Cienfuegos being one of the few examples of any significant Fidelista or other revolutionary tendencies.¹⁵

Much the same can be said of the air force. While some efforts were made before World War II to found such a service, and indeed by the 1930s some aircraft were flying under Cuban colors, it was really only after Pearl Harbor that one can speak of a Cuban air service. Again, it was as a result of Lend-Lease provisions during the war that significant aircraft were transferred from the United States to the fledgling Cuban force. And when Cuba signed its version of the Mutual Assistance Pact arrangements of the early 1950s, a result of U.S. strategic needs related to the Korean War, more aircraft were sent. The Cuban air force of Batista's day was deeply involved in fighting the Castro insurgency, repeatedly bombing suspected rebel positions or just peasants thought to be potentially pro-Castro. Here, there was even less opposition to the government of the day than in the navy.

All this is merely to emphasize that the traditions of the *Ejército Rebelde* are those of an "ejército," and that the FAR are very much an invention of the post-victory Cuban defense picture. This does not in any way take away from the achievements of the young pilots who fought so splendidly in defeating the Bay of Pigs landings. It is to say that the tradition is, while certainly well tested there and later in Angola, a new one. Cuba has forces that are dominated by the army but less so than at other times in its history. Indeed, and by Latin American standards, it has balanced forces. This is doubtless being eroded as the other two services, more dependent on technology and equipment, are more hard hit by the length and severity of the present crisis than is the more labor-intensive land force.

The Army runs the bulk of the reserve force, the EJT, most of the state enterprises in military hands, and represents the major military presence in the country. The other two services, while present, are not in this league. There are few obvious differences among the three services as every effort is being made to ensure they act as a single force. This starts with their name and carries on with all manner of joint command groups and tasking.

Less technology dependent than its sister services, the army is less hard hit by the crisis of the last years. But its fighting quality has doubtless been affected nonetheless. As mentioned, the *milicianos* as a whole can properly be considered a pale shadow of their former selves even if the same, as we have shown earlier, cannot be asserted about the army as a whole. No longer do officers of promise choose to go to the reserves as in the early days of the GTP. Thus, the reserve force is not able to provide the land force overall with that quality of sustainability in defensive operations for which it was prided in the past. This is doubly true of the EJT, now virtually entirely tied down in agricultural tasks and whose members do little, and sometimes no, military training of importance before heading off to their more mundane field labor tasks. And although much was made of the force during the thirtieth anniversary celebrations in 2003, the truth seems to be far from the high ringing phrases of those ceremonies. While trumpeting the military value of the EJT, even those in charge of the events admitted that the main role of the force was economic. Called on occasion the "4th army" ("el cuarto ejército"—the three others being those of the West, Center, and East of the country), the EJT is essential in maintaining Cuba's still ringing claim to put a million people under arms if attacked.¹⁶ This has without a doubt meant much for the overall fighting capability of the land force as a whole. When added to a lack of transport, fuel, spare parts, training, ammunition for practice firing, and so many more problems, this situation is a serious one for the military.

This does not mean that the FAR's land element has not come up with answers. But it does mean that these answers have had to be found in an overall change to strategic deployments. As mentioned, a relatively small number of units are still tasked with the main job of deterring and fighting any invasion. These units receive the most cannibalized equipment, spare parts, ammunition, transport, and fuel so that they can maintain a respectable level of combat readiness and thus do their primary job. In order to achieve this, other units have been relegated, formally or informally, to a much-reduced state of readiness. They can expect nothing like the logistics support, training, and equipment and weapons conditions of these more "front-line" units. Instead they maintain a much more static existence with fewer exercises, much less public attention, less training, less use of ammunition for firing practice, and the other inconveniences of low status where key roles are concerned.

The Navy and Deterrence

The navy is involved in high-profile roles, not only in deterrence and defense, but also in *secondary* roles of *primary* diplomatic importance. The links between the FAR and MININT have been increasingly important in recent years, and especially since 1989. And the MININT had responsibility not only for the *Tropas de Guarda Fronteras* but also for the ships they maintained for offshore duties short of full-scale naval operations. With the increased role of the FAR in antinarcotics and counter-illegal emigration duties, the navy's direct action in combination with the TGF has been increased. Indeed, it is often difficult to see any real difference between the navy and the patrol craft of the TGF.

In equipment terms, the same cannibalization vitally necessary to maintain army weapons and vehicles in order has been central to a fleet even more dependent on technology and equipment. Mechanized infantry can always be converted to "foot-mobile" infantry. But a warship must either be a warship or not be one. Cuba's once-proud fleet of almost exclusively Soviet ships is no more. But given the "new world," and the new roles Cuba has given its fleet to undertake, this is not as serious as might be imagined. Swift missile patrol craft of the classic Soviet Baltic Fleet type have had to take a secondary position to less sophisticated small vessels needed for antidrug and emigration duties. While some of the former are doubtless maintained in some order of preparedness as a result of the continuing deterrence/defense role, there is little doubt that the pressures under which the navy is working do not allow for much of this luxury.

There appears to be still one landing ship in the fleet, product of another era of internationalism and great foreign support. But the submarine fleet is clearly no longer with us in any real form. Thus the navy, while retaining the operational responsibility for deterrence and defense roles, is not in any sense as able to perform those roles in reality. Instead, the priority is firmly on those tasks needed for domestic security and impressing the foreigners: drugs and emigration.

Barring the extremely unlikely (at least in the short- and mid-term) acceptance of the argument that the United States should be helping the Cuban armed forces in their antidrugs and anti-emigration operations, it is to be expected that cannibalization will continue and have even more deleterious effects on the fleet. Training in sophisticated naval operations is virtually at an end and has been since the Special Period began. Courses offered abroad have entirely dried up. The fleet is in grave danger of "rusting out," as navies do when working hard and not properly maintained.

It must also be remembered when dealing with the navy that in the Cuban security context of today, where national defense is still formally based on the *Guerra de Todo el Pueblo* concept but where making it a reality is impossible, those forces not central to that strategy can get rather short shrift. This is likely to remain a problem for the navy regardless of the advantages of some of its roles. It is not merely expensive and hard to maintain at an efficient level of readiness, its non-patrol duties are less key to national defense strategy than many other taskings allocated to the other services. This was already seen in the first decisions on cutting made at the beginning of the Special Period. It is still a factor today.¹⁷

Before leaving the navy, it is important to say that for the deterrence system the maritime strength available to oppose an invasion was important if not as central as that of the land forces. The Cuban navy's main strength is and was in its patrol vessels, whose main task in war was to harass enemy shipping approaching or in landing zones. This fast patrol boat fleet is doubtless still in better condition than are the larger elements of the fleet, but cannibalization can be expected to have done its work with fewer such vessels deployable in case of emergency and those deployed will of course also be less modern and seaworthy. Cuba is fortunate in that the secondary roles mentioned above dovetail nicely into wartime roles and thus into jobs related to deterrence. But the smaller number of fast attack craft, their usual use and training in tasks other than defeating invasion, and all the other elements lacking in the Special Period, certainly mean less deterrence capability.

In previous times, a U.S. navy attack on the island would have had to face major harassing operations against any landing. Such an attack

would have had to deploy major resources to counter or destroy the Cuban vessels employed in such roles. And this would have taken air as well as maritime resources. The cays and islands of Cuba's coasts are ideal for such defensive operations and the United States would doubtless have taken the problem seriously in planning an invasion. At the moment there would still doubtless be such a need but it would be at an entirely new level. The numbers of Cuban vessels available would today be fewer with their efficiency reduced. There is no doubt that they would fight well according to their possibilities but they would not be able to do so as in the past. Raúl Castro took advantage of the fortieth anniversary of the Revolutionary Navy in September 2003, to claim that despite the difficult times it is passing, Cuba can "count on a Navy which, through its austerity and realistic and independent concepts in the use of technology and armaments, is at the height of development reached by our principal defense systems."¹⁸ No doubt the navy is doing a great deal with very little. Despite severe problems it is still a force with some punch, and this also will not have escaped the Pentagon analyses being done in recent years.

The Air Force and Deterrence

The air force that the Revolution inherited was far from anti-Batista. It had served him well against the forces working to overthrow him. Thus, as with the navy, work began essentially from zero in order to forge a revolutionary air force committed to the same goals as was the Rebel Army. The new air force was quickly required to prove its worth and its loyalty. The first elements of the invasion plan for the Bay of Pigs in April 1961 were attacks on the Cuban air force. They were aimed at depriving the Revolution of the capacity to repel the invading exile force through air power hitting the beaches at a moment of particular vulnerability for the invaders. The attacks were a failure due to measures taken by the FAR in the light of intelligence gleaned about the timing and nature of the invasion.

Following this, the air force T-33 training aircraft and British-built "Sea Furies" attack aircraft struck the invasion force a series of decisive blows. These were aimed not only at the troops and equipment on the beaches but also at their landing and supply ships. This well-designed tactical approach, when combined with some ferocious and some not so impressive counterattacks on the part of the Militia and regular army troops facing the invaders, soon put paid to the chances of a successful invasion.¹⁹ Air force junior officers had proven themselves not only as fine young combat pilots but also as loyal members of the FAR. Great courage and skill were deployed in the attacks and the

prestige of the air force grew immeasurably. From a small and seemingly inconsequential force, the air element of the FAR was from now on going to become a major force to reckon with.

Soviet aid was crucial in this. No plan for deterring or defeating a U.S. invasion could be imagined in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs without a major air element. And only high-performance aircraft would be able to take the pounding inherent in fighting the U.S. military themselves and not mere exiles. Thus the USSR was asked to provide first-rank jet aircraft for the Cuban air force in later years. This continued through the remaining years of the cold war with Cuba one of the spoiled few among Soviet-supported Third World states in maintaining a significant position as a real air power. Right up to the rapid and timely delivery of Mig-29s as the cold war ended, elements in the Soviet High Command seemed to be willing to underwrite the need for a virtually first-class air force in Cuba.

Those years are of course well behind us. If ships are dependent on spare parts, fuel, training for crews, periodic important repairs, and complete refits, all the more are aircraft whose working lives are shorter, safety issues are more pressing, and flight and other training needs are often greater. But as for the navy, cannibalization has been the rule. Even though Soviet equipment is going for rockbottom prices in the aftermath of the end of Russian superpower status, Cuba cannot even afford to buy what is available in these bargain basement conditions. Russia has recently been willing to do a minimum job at helping out, for a price; however, even with that, the air force is in poor shape. But as with the army, priorities have been decided and acted upon. Some key aircraft are kept in the air and others are not. The air force has found itself with an important role in supporting MININT and especially TGF operations against narcotraffickers. Often air resources are vital to tail and intercept aircraft dropping off drugs, usually into the sea.

Under these circumstances, the air force's *Defensa Antiaérea de la Fuerza Aérea Revolucionaria* (DAAFAR) or Anti-Air Defense is brought into play on a frequent basis to level the playing field with the often superbly equipped *narcos*. Jet aircraft can tail intruders, force them to land, check on the boats to which they are transferring their cargoes, and even shoot down intruder aircraft or fire on intruder boats. Their speed and ability to stay for long periods over the zone of interest ensures a deterrent to these activities. They can even take pictures of the intruders and provide useful intelligence to Cuban authorities either for the latter's use or for furtherance to U.S. or European military or law enforcement agencies.²⁰

In addition, the air force is important in tracking the movements of illegal emigrants or those that provide them with paid transport. With

naval resources at a premium, the FAR and TGF depend on aircraft to give their patrol craft eyes to see far over the horizon. Then the patrol craft can move in well informed and use their limited resources to much greater effect. While especially after the incidents of the "Brothers to the Rescue" shoot down of February 1996 the FAR are extremely careful of repetitions of events with high-level repercussions abroad, the air force is unlikely to see this role diminish in the current context of the bilateral relationship with the United States, where that country sees Cuba's control of its own migrants as extremely important to its own national security.

This, however, reinforces some of the matters discussed earlier. A small number of aircraft, even high-performance ones, are unlikely to act as a deterrent in the way the powerful deployment of earlier days could do. A U.S. attack in the past could have expected real fighting in the air to contest its control of that vital element of modern war. The USAF knew it would face significant fighter strength at the beginnings of such a war. It also knew a priority would be knocking out air bases if it intended to ensure relatively unopposed landings by sea or parachute. The same went for the need to take out Cuban air transport in order to stop the FAR from sending troops where most needed. Finally, putting out of business the FAR's impressive helicopter fleet, both transport and combat, was necessary in order to ensure less effective resistance to the arrival of U.S. troops. Elements of these capabilities remain in the FAR but not in the same fashion, and this must trouble Havana as it tries to think of how best to keep the deterrent system's air elements alive and kicking. There is little doubt that Cuba's fighter and other pilots would do their best with what they have. But they simply no longer have much. If deterrence in these troubled times is to work, there is a need for addressing this situation.

The Public Relations Battle

None of these measures would be worthwhile, given the nature of the FAR's taskings, without a public relations effort of some importance to ensure that both foreign and domestic audiences are aware of the services' continuing ability to fulfill the roles given them. Thus, at home there continues to be a department of the FAR that works hard to inform the public about exercises and operations that the government wishes publicized. This is especially true of television coverage of training and public military events such as great anniversaries and the like.

The FAR's publications record has, not surprisingly, fallen off dramatically since the Special Period was declared. This is in line with

other elements of the printed press and literature in general. Paper is scarce although not nearly as hard to obtain as it was in earlier days, and, of course, the forces have not only a certain priority but also have their own access to foreign exchange. Ink and other elements of the process have been in short supply as well but again the FAR have their advantages. Be that as it may, as for many publications, the FAR's *Verde Olivo* magazine has only been able to publish irregularly in recent years after being published weekly ever since early 1960.²¹ Some other military publications have ceased activity altogether.

On the other hand, the printing press of the FAR still produces some high-quality books on issues as wide-ranging as military history and current economic matters. But this is obviously only on a priority basis with military history as in part the traditional Latin American mythmaking. At this point in the history of the Revolution, this mythmaking, or more recently myth sustaining, continues to be vitally important for the state and the forces. The FAR and the government wish the public to understand that the shocks of the Special Period have not seriously damaged the armed forces' potential in defeating invasion and in acting decisively in a more general sense to threats from any direction. In an indirect way, this of course ensures that the population is under no illusions where the capacity of the state to defend itself from internal as well as external enemies is concerned.

On the international front, the importance of the public relations effort is even more striking. But in both cases, it is television that seems to get the main role in the business of convincing all that the FAR are still ready and able to fight. Major exercises are covered extensively on television news and documentary programs. Thus, high-performance jets strafe positions while tanks, armored cars, and armored personnel carriers race forward and disgorge infantry to press home the attack. Of course first-rank units are generally used in such PR "battles" but the same can be said for many countries where such activities are concerned. The difference in Cuba is the great importance of being *believable* and indeed of being *believed*.

While there is no U.S. military attaché in the Special Interests Section building in Havana, there certainly are people taking note of the state of the armed forces. And of course U.S. allies such as Spain and several Latin American countries do have such attachés in situ and several others such as Canada, France, and the United Kingdom have attachés living in other capitals but with the responsibility of watching Cuban events closely. Through the normal sharing of information between close allies, and through their own resources, there is little doubt that the U.S. military is well informed on these exercises and on the general state of the Cuban armed forces. Of course it is in the

interests of the FAR that the impression given is the best possible. It is after all of such things that deterrence is made.

Who Is the Cuban Soldier, Sailor, Airman Today?

The bulk of this book has been about larger trends and the "big picture." It is now time to talk about the most basic, and most important, element of the FAR today or at any time. And that is its manpower. It was not technology or military might that decided events at the Bay of Pigs or in the battles in Angola. It was the Cuban soldier, airman, and even sailor. This is in line with the widespread view, held by strategists to economists, that Cuba's greatest asset is its people.

This can seem trite indeed until one realizes that the military forces today have within their ranks the youthful representatives of a society that is simply transformed when compared with itself a few short decades ago. The Cuban young man or woman is better educated, in better health, more exposed to the world (despite often shameful censorship), and more self-assured than his father or grandfather could ever have imagined. He is therefore going to be a different sort of material out of which to mold an armed force. And while this is different in many ways from what one sees in more developed countries, there are connections here as well. Social change and education have recently required "northern" forces to rethink all manner of sacrosanct issues and change to accommodate them. And Cuba has had to do so as well.

In the North, armed forces have incorporated women to a degree unthinkable a generation ago. In many countries the racial integration of units was addressed and in some countries the ethnic basis of some units. Sexual preference issues that had supposedly forced armies to face truly difficult problems in the past have been addressed with ease and found to have been vastly exaggerated with only the United States, among all the NATO countries, holding out against reform. Married soldiers now constitute the majority in most northern armed forces and the needs of families are now taken much more seriously than in the days of the "band of brothers" (usually unmarried "brothers") of yesteryear. In this context, regulations have been relaxed, new flexibility found, and less stringent codes on many issues developed.

In Cuba much of this took place earlier. The needs of the defense of the Revolution were such that many traditional concepts surrounding military service came crashing down earlier on the island than elsewhere. Doubtless the most dramatic of these related to women. In the "macho" society of Latin America, and particularly of Latin American armies in the 1950s, women's roles were usually nonexistent or

limited to nursing tasks. The Cuban Revolution was going to be different. Women arrived in Havana with the Rebel Army, already well respected and having seen combat. In addition, a number of women had taken part in the clandestine activities of the 26th of July Movement in the cities. Women such as Celia Sánchez, Haydée (Yéyé) Santamaria, and several others were central to a number of operations, and when things got too "hot" for them in the cities they joined Fidel's forces in the mountains. Some were eventually to found the Mariana Grajales Women's Platoon, a less than platoon-size subunit often given combat tasks and not just rear area duties.²²

These women arrived in Havana in uniform. It was not a question of arranging things so that women could join. And when in December of 1959, the *Milicias Nacionales Revolucionarias* were organized, a large number of women expressed an interest in serving. The first photographs of women militia personnel carrying weapons began to appear. And by March of the next year, with assigned missions much clearer, seeing those women in the streets became much more common and this Cuban practice was soon replicated among guerrillas across Latin America.²³

The rest of the *Ejército Rebelde* was made up of young men constituting the rich racial mosaic of Cuba. In stark contrast to Batista's army where racial issues could still be decisive in career matters, Castro's forces were promoted essentially on merit (and loyalty) alone as befitted a force fighting for its life against great odds.²⁴

The FAR take the question of family life for serving members very seriously. On the one hand the conscript is very rarely married. And on the other, regular NCOs or officers are almost always married and from very early on there were generous regulations allowing for them to serve under circumstances that took marital status very much into consideration. Indeed, serving women have had generous arrangements since immediately after the victory of 1959. While sexual preference issues have still not been addressed in the FAR where, as in the rest of Cuban and Latin American society, *macho* attitudes on such matters flourish, there is more flexibility on this issue as well than in the past.

Thus on most issues of social change the FAR were ahead of their time, especially by Latin American standards. And on many matters the simple size of the FAR, militias, EJT, MININT, and other security services obliged the authorities to be flexible. For in Cuba the forces really did look and act like a "people armed." Soon after the alphabetization campaign, and with the expansion of the MNR in 1960, the FAR started to look even less like other Latin American armies, and both the FAR and the militias began to be even more distinctly

Cuban. Officers of all racial hues were to be seen everywhere with merit being rewarded by promotion and recognition. Whites served under blacks as a matter of course as did men under women and sophisticated urbanites worked under the previously despised “guajiro” or country farmer.

People from all walks of life served. As in Latin America so in Cuba, sons of the rich and powerful had never served in the army. In most countries, service in the ranks meant that you were from the dispossessed and the underprivileged racial groups. White members of the middle and upper classes always found some means to avoid conscription. This was true in Cuba as well before 1959 and the shock of the change was impressive; however, as mentioned earlier, conscription in Cuba was never, even in wartime, a real issue.

Those were, however, exceptional years. There was an optimism, pride, drive, and spirit abroad in Cuba never seen before or since. There is no study yet of the MNR but when it is done there will be much to analyze for mobilization planners in other countries. Hundreds of thousands of people from all walks of life truly *volunteered* to defend the Revolution. While there were obvious advantages to doing so, it is equally true that there was as well a massive desire to do so for largely altruistic reasons.

This led to an armed force that included intellectuals, students, manual workers, farmers, housewives, office workers, doctors, lawyers, and virtually every other group one could imagine in a society. It can be asserted that never before had a Latin American army represented its society so totally. Patience was required from all. Students would ask questions about why one did things in a particular way in the army. Senior NCOs found it frustrating and difficult to deal with such a revolutionary attitude to military training. But such was the power of the Revolution and Fidel's call to arms that everything seemed to come out all right in the end.

An armed force with a cultural level never seen before in Latin America was also the result. Appeals to devotion were not only made but answered. And with them came appeals for discipline and sacrifice. This would mark the armed forces until today, although it must be said that Soviet disciplinary methods, while hardly applied across the board, were introduced later and reduced the *cubanía* of much of what was done in the FAR in the early years of professionalization.

The famous “siete pesos” recruit (so named because he received seven pesos a month) is to all intents and purposes certain to read and write, a situation only dreamt of in most Latin American conscripted forces.²⁵ In addition, the medical system will have ensured that he is in good health, again a problem that dogs many of the

region's forces. He will have at least a rudimentary knowledge of his national culture. And he will know something of the objectives of the political authorities of his country.

Basic training is perceived as being quite tough, although it should be remembered that the Cuban recruit is on arrival fairly inured to hardship after surviving for many years the rigors of the Special Period. Indeed, many recruits find their service a positive experience in part because they have access to three meals a day on a guaranteed if not luxury basis and share in at least a few military perks. In addition, since such a huge percentage of the population does serve, the recruit will not be in for too many surprises when reporting for his period with the colors as he will have heard stories of its challenges and sacrifices from many friends and relatives.

The FAR therefore became in its early years an institution of great flexibility combining increasing sophistication professionally, a growing tradition of real active service, a major role in organizing from the ranks of the regulars the whole of the national mobilization effort, and numerical growth in order to offer the country a truly impressive defense structure. The arrival of massive Soviet assistance, and growing linkages with that country, led to changes. The Soviets tried to instill even firmer discipline in the forces. And certainly some of their ideas took hold. But, in general, the FAR remained a Cuban force, with a more relaxed approach to military duty even though one with an improving professionalism.

The individual serving soldier, sailor, or airman is either a regular or a conscript. Force cuts mean that a larger percentage of the total force is now regular and the call-up of personnel has been much smaller in recent years than in the last decades. This reflects not only the size of the force but to some extent its reduced responsibilities as well. The serviceman who serves in the regular force can have applied for that career program or can have chosen to transfer to it during conscript service. Women, who do not take part in compulsory service but are very well represented in the FAR overall, usually join the forces automatically as a career or at least on a long service basis.

As early as when the young Cuban male presents himself to the conscription center of his town (*Comité Militar Municipal*), usually during his sixteenth year, he can express an interest in an eventual career. The personal interview normally given at that time is the young man's first exposure to the conscription system and is also, at least in theory, compulsory (Law 75 of National Defense). The interviewing officer will discuss with the potential recruit (who may never actually serve) his options in terms of career or conscript service. During the interview he will compile a profile of the young man in

terms of his past and present keenness on the institutions of the Revolution, such as the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution and the CDRs, and on his suitability for a variety of types of national service.

The first main division of possibilities the young man can look at is whether he would prefer to serve in the FAR or in one of the MININT branches, such as TGE, *Bomberos* (the national fire service), or Customs and Immigration. Those with fewer educational qualifications may well not find anything much on offer. They may simply be assigned to the EJT and end up selling food in a market.²⁶ This service can also at times be replaced with other nonmilitary national service. This is not so much a question of religious or other preferences as is common in Europe or the United States. It is, rather, one of fitting the person to a task more closely connected with his interests and value to the community. For example, some teach in rural areas; others do social work, often of a distinctly political kind. These jobs can take the place of classic military service and subsequently give one the important discharge document saying that one has completed the obligatory national service requirement.

Through one means or another many young people avoid this service altogether. The system is far from airtight. But in this context there are two important points to remember. The first is that avoidance of service, unlike most of the rest of Latin America, is very rarely indeed through political influence. Sons of ministers routinely, though not always, do their military service just as those of farmers.²⁷ The second is that Cuba currently produces youth of military age at a rate higher than the demand for such persons for military service. Thus it is logical to use some for purposes other than national defense.

While in the service, promising young men can also have their service shortened by asking for transfers on a more permanent basis to other parts of the security service. They can ask for a move to a career in the *Policía Nacional Revolucionaria* for example. Or they can ask for some branch of the MININT toward which they seem particularly inclined. This can be done when their commanding officer deems them likely to be useful in those fields and when they agree to such a change in status. Finally, there are many arrangements linked with further academic or technical training where the time in service, or even the complete period of service, can be waived in favor of further studies.

Combinations of a bewildering complexity result, such as young men who begin studies, do national military service for a shorter period than usual, spend some time in social work, and then continue to study in a field of interest to the nation. In fact, the system is very

flexible and doubtless has many advantages to a country with Cuba's needs. It must, however, be said that the overall result is not the mass of well-trained individuals and units proposed for the *Guerra de Todo el Pueblo*. When combined with other factors of training and preparation, what one sees rather than this grander objective of happier times is a population with the following spread:

- many young men with no real military training to speak of;
- many of their contemporaries with only little such training;
- still others with longer periods in uniform but in units with little ability to do significant training of the old, anti-invasion or deterrent type, leaving them with poor military skills;
- others with longer periods of service but essentially in agriculture with virtually no real training of the more advanced type;
- and others with really quite good training behind them in first-class units and plenty of time spent in them.

This spread in the results of conscription would not be so serious except that the current state of the militia and reserve systems in general is such that further opportunities beyond those of a conscript's full-time service in order to hone skills, take significant refresher training, and maintain a real mobilization base of the kind foreseen in the GTP are not what they once were. And with regular conscripted service not what it was either, the system is doubtless not able to perform as well as originally planned. Given the Special Period's absolutely exceptional demands on the population and armed forces of the island, however, any other result after more than fifteen years would have been virtually unthinkable. And, as argued by this author throughout this book, the results are probably better than one could imagine for almost any other country under similar circumstances.

Having said this it is important to remember that regular force members serving with the colors beyond the minimum conscript time have not represented a large percentage of total strength. The nature of the cuts during the Special Period has ensured this. And regular units can be very good indeed. The Special Forces doubtless top the list with top-notch soldiers serving as career or at least long-service troops. Apart from these soldiers, the nature of regular service means that those making a career or at least spending a long period in the ranks tend to end up as well-trained soldiers, sailors, or airmen. Some leave for civilian life as senior NCOs after several years. Some are commissioned into the officer corps, a system virtually unknown in the rest of Latin America. Some stay on for a full career while

others reintegrate into the work force. Of these last, a number come out with good records making them ideal for the other state security forces.

Conclusion

The myriad additional calls on Cuba's defense forces over the years of the Special Period have no doubt weakened considerably the effectiveness of those forces. Their budgets, strength, sophistication, equipment, training levels, weapon capabilities, and a great deal more have been sorely damaged by the vast range of negative effects of the loss of partnerships with other armed forces since 1989 and by the climate of near-collapse of the national economy for much of the time since that fateful year. The FAR are not in a position to completely deter an attack by the United States as they were for many years in conjunction with the Soviet Union or merely as a result of the excellent system put in place by the Cubans themselves. And needless to say, they are not in a position to defeat such an attack either.

It would be a mistake, however, to count the FAR out on the subject of traditional defense and deterrence. This is because the United States is probably more than deterred on this score anyway not only by the FAR's retained capabilities but by the lack of a connection between potential gains and potential losses resulting from taking up this option. The FAR would doubtless still fight such an invasion and would almost surely inflict unacceptable casualties on any U.S. force attempting it. Thus, as the Pentagon has made clear, the game is hardly worth the candle. To that extent, deterrence still works and the FAR's role in making it work is still central.

It is the second option that is more likely. This suggests that in a state of disorder or even bloodshed, the migration out of Cuba might become so great, and the political costs of nonintervention so compelling, that the United States might choose to invade *faute de mieux*. Whether the FAR could then deter a U.S. invasion is altogether another proposition. In that case, if invasion had many powerful proponents, and if the FAR were more than occupied keeping the domestic lid on, the United States might well no longer be deterred by FAR capabilities. And of course if there were by then widespread discontent with the government, spilling over into violent opposition, the Pentagon might assess the risks as greatly reduced in any case since resistance on the island under these circumstances would probably be much less significant.

It should once again be underscored that in the less dramatic ways outlined here as only vaguely and inaccurately "secondary," the FAR

are more than able to contribute to highly central elements of national security and military defense in the fullest sense. Their role in the struggle against illegal emigration and the narcotics trade is essential and, as one has seen over and over, is vital for Cuba's international position and for progress in the vexed relationship with the United States.

The FAR are still an effective military force even if one no longer able to fully provide the deterrence and defense services the Cuban state would ideally have. It would be wrong in the extreme to conclude that they are a spent force or do not have a great deal of bite in them yet. As seen in other chapters the officer corps may be frustrated but it is still loyal. The loyalty of the army as a whole, at least its professional elements, can be taken as nearly a given despite the enormous disadvantages of the current scene strategically, institutionally, and even personally for many personnel. If defeating a serious invasion is extremely unlikely, deterring it is not. And if economic conditions permit improvements to the forces in the near future, this situation could improve markedly. After all, they have most of the essential elements except those that money can indeed buy.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

Fidel Castro certainly appears to truly believe that we are on the verge of entering once more what will be revolutionary times. He is convinced that the marginalization of countless millions in the Third World, and particularly in Latin America, will continue with the “savage capitalism” of today’s globalization, and the neoliberal economic thrust, both acting forcefully and in close combination with a U.S. hegemony rejecting any trends toward international justice that might hurt that country’s national interests. Under these circumstances, in his view, there will be a continuation of major social disturbances such as those seen recently in Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay, and elsewhere in the region, as well as more major political upheavals such as Colombia’s insurgency, the Zapatista movement in Mexico, and in the more debatable rebirth of *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru.

He sees these still relatively small-scale disturbances of the status quo as merely the beginning of a vast rejection of neoliberalism and U.S. domination that will in the future shake the capitalist world to its foundations. But even he agrees that we are only at the beginning of this process and that for the time being U.S. hegemony is firmly anchored and a force with which one must reckon seriously, and in addition that neoliberalism’s failures are not yet visible to all and do not seem to affect the central fact, as the United States itself suggests, that the neoliberal agenda is “the only game in town.”

Thus, we are, even in Fidel Castro’s analysis, not yet in revolutionary times and clearly the efforts of recent decades are a deep disappointment to him in terms of their success in achieving real reform in Latin America. Fidel does feel that the liberal democracies of Latin America, however weak, are a step up from military dictatorships of recent memory. But their interest in deep reform in these conservative times

is only slightly more impressive than that one might have found in the region's officers' messes 25 years ago. Indeed, it could be argued that the civilian élites of much of Latin America intend to hold back reform even more than did the military governments of those days.

So far the violent reactions of Latin American publics to many dominant trends in the economy have not resulted in much reform on the part of their governments. Most regional governments are in a difficult situation indeed. That is, the international financial institutions on which they are so dependent for stability and support insist on stringent measures of control of state expenditures, public service size, and many other matters that hamstringing those governments' ability to provide even essential services to much of the population. Fiscal responsibility is pressed as the vital priority whatever the impact on the public. On the other hand, these very measures are received with great hostility, and even violence, by marginalized elements of the population. And so time passes with governments unable to maintain stability at home while pleasing those with power abroad. Repressive measures then appear to be the only means with which to keep the lid on the situation; while such measures, it is hoped, prove temporary, there are no guarantees.

This, in Castro's view, will not work forever. The impossibility for countries and masses on the margins of the economic system, caught in a frightful and vicious circle of poverty, violence, and repression, to escape from it and actually move forward is patently clear. Under these circumstances, so the logic goes, one can expect only further violence and further repression in the future until significant elements of these nations' publics understand that only revolution can change anything that matters. Cuba does not favor this evolution in events. But it does consider them inevitable if there are no profound reforms to the international economic system including its terms of trade, investment, movement of labor, and so much more of its current method of operating. And it sees no sign in the "new world order" of élites willing to put into place, or even countenance, such reform. As a result of this, Fidel, and Cuba's diplomatic representatives abroad, always seem to be warning about dire future events and the need for action now to preclude them in time. Instead of 40 years ago, when one heard calls for immediate revolution to force deep change, now there are constant calls for the international system to heal itself and thus avoid revolution.

Where then are the armed forces in these still *counterrevolutionary* times? They are under great pressure. But they have done an extraordinary job of effecting change within their own institution and of responding to the breadth of challenges placed on them in general by

the Special Period and in particular by the orders received from Fidel: not only to become self-sufficient but also to actually contribute to the economy in a wide range of highly nontraditional, if not necessarily new, ways.

The FAR have successfully confronted the challenge of massive cuts in size. Despite the bottlenecks in promotions that this has caused, morale is surprisingly high among officers, even junior ones. Indeed, even where the future officer is concerned, officer-cadets seem proud of their nation's institutions, their armed forces, their country, and their chosen career. This is not surprising on a number of scores but perhaps most interesting is that there is a policy that at least 50 percent of cadets in the Camilo Cienfuegos Cadet School system will be sons of workers and farmers. This ensures that these social groupings will be well represented in the armed forces of the future.¹ It also tends to ensure or reinforce their loyalty as they belong to what is doubtless the only military school and college system in Latin America where the percentage of sons of farmers and workers is anything near so high.² While national service is not popular with the young, especially the urban young, it is accepted and many graduate from it considering the experience a positive one. Even those who do not feel such positive sentiments rarely feel that they were particularly badly treated during their time of military service.

The professional forces still look remarkably good. While there is certainly plenty of scruffiness in the EJT and the reserve forces, this is rare indeed in the ranks of the regulars. Troops are well turned out and seem proud of the olive green of the FAR. MININT personnel seem to share this pride, if not to the same degree. But the FAR main combat units look trim and ready to go to work. The Special Forces would do credit to most modern armed forces. This has not been easy under the truly frightful conditions of the early years of the Special Period 1990–1994, nor even under the slightly more pleasant circumstances of the last eleven years of moderate recovery. The FAR have remained proud and professional. The results of the dedication, hard work, and abnegation of thousands of officers and NCOs are obvious. Rather than disintegrating or going into a tailspin of disgruntlement, the permanent personnel of the FAR have held the organization together, kept it from becoming excessively depressed, maintained its loyalty, and especially its traditions and pride.

The FAR have almost every problem imaginable from the technical and personnel points of view. That they are still as effective a force is an enormous compliment to their strengths. As a student of armed forces for over 40 years, and one wearing an infantry uniform for 16 of them, this author is frankly astonished to see how they have held

together in the face of the gigantic challenges of recent years. There are morale and corruption problems and massive technical and professional efficiency issues. But many observers have missed the point with all this, that is, that despite these seemingly overwhelming problems hammering the FAR for over 15 years, the institution is not only still there but is actually doing reasonably well.

In terms of its contribution to the nation as a whole, it can be argued that the armed forces may indeed be doing more not less than in their heyday. New and important tasks have been given them in roles they have not usually played. They have responded well to these new jobs. Indeed, on occasion the FAR seem surprisingly spry. After all, their numbers have been cut much more than most Western or even Warsaw Pact armed forces in the post-cold war era, perhaps by as much as 75 percent or even more in a few short years. They have seen sophisticated weapons and equipment deliveries dry up altogether. They have seen "rust-out" of equipment and spare parts problems that few logistics officers in the West could even imagine. They have seen their interesting postings abroad all but disappear. And they have seen stimulating professional courses at home slashed and overseas courses cease completely.

The FAR have not "enjoyed" the peace dividend in any sense. While Western armed forces could say that they were being cut in the context of a world strategic context favorable to their countries and much less threatening to them than the cold war, the FAR have had to acknowledge not only that their country is in greater danger than ever but that the socialism they also defend is in full retreat worldwide and has been for two decades at least. They must also observe that they are being cut not because the context is so favorable that such cuts *can* be undertaken, but rather because that context is so dreadful that there is simply *no* other choice.

The election of Left-leaning heads of government first in Venezuela and now in Brazil and Ecuador, and possibly in Argentina and Paraguay as well, is a bright sign, for Cuba, in this dismal cloud. The warm welcome for Fidel at the presidential inaugurations of these leaders has shown that Cuba as a model for Latin America is a shaken concept but not one that has disappeared. Many Latin Americans of a nationalist hue still look to Cuba and the bearded leader as the only country and leader that have stood up to the hegemon. And despite the tendency to excessive rhetoric, there is a deep respect for the willingness of Cubans to shoulder the burden this implies in terms of the enmity of the greatest power on earth.

This is not necessarily pleasant for Cubans to hear, for they are indeed suffering the combined ills of a savage embargo or blockade.

The years have been long and revolutionary appeals very often have fallen on deaf ears in a population that is truly suffering. But few remain unimpressed with the fact that Fidel still has such draw. We have mentioned, however, that Cubans do not feel very Latin American however much José Martí tried to instill in them such sentiments.³ Everyone knows someone in the United States or indeed has family or friends living there. And Cubans look north not south, west, or east for their comparisons as they have done for over a century. The challenge in keeping revolutionary fervor alive and well in the young may prove impossible to meet if it has not already done so. In Havana, my own observation has led me to conclude that such devotion is close to dead at least among the young. But this is not true in the countryside, in the smaller towns, or among older members of the public who either knew the old prerevolutionary Cuba or enjoyed the long years of relatively good times before the Special Period.

The backdrop to all this is still the vast downturn in Cuba's relative position with the United States as the only superpower, no counterpoise to that power available or on the horizon, and a government in power in Washington that could now at least be imagined turning to a military solution for the Cuban "challenge." And it is exactly at this time that the government faces a lingering and still hard-hitting crisis at home while its deployable forces are much less numerous and powerful than in most previous instances of stress. Little wonder that the mood in Havana, while outwardly calm, is worried.⁴

The reflections that I have offered here are, as said in the introduction to this volume, just that. There has been no attempt here to give a history of the FAR during these 15 trying years. Even less has there been a desire to analyze in strictly strategic studies terms the armed forces of Cuba over this period. Instead, it is hoped that while there has been something of both of these there has been more simple reflecting on what this author has seen in the Special Period in terms of its effects on an impressive military institution.

The FAR are neither the perfect defenders of "patria y socialismo," as they are called in Cuba, nor are they simply the repressive apparatus of a savage dictatorship as one hears so often outside the island. They are a military institution whose roles extend much more deeply into the life of Cuba than do those of most armed forces in the world. There are many and varied reasons—historical, personal, economic, political, social—for this being the case now and having been the case for so much of the history of this nation since 1959. And in Western terms there is little doubt that we would consider many of these roles to be excessive in the sense of often being well outside the purview of armed forces in a normally functioning democracy at peace.

Cuba is not, however, a normal functioning democracy. Nor is it in many senses at peace. Rather it is in many respects truly under siege and any judgments of its military must take that into account. This does not mean that the government is unwilling to use this state of affairs to justify things that should not be happening. It is willing to do so and it does so frequently, far too frequently in the view of this author. But the use of the military in diplomatic roles is essential if peace is to be preserved. Their potential use in support of the other security forces, at least in emergency situations, is unfortunate but hardly unusual. And their use in the economy is not only far from surprising given their history but also their present situation and that of the nation.

In the final analysis, the FAR are there to deter and defend, as has been suggested so often here. They certainly act as one more means to deter the development of an armed opposition on the island, and their critics would add an *unarmed* opposition as well. But all armies do this. We have discussed repeatedly, and perhaps too often, this point but it is essential to reiterate that their central role is the deterrence of an invasion by the only country whose policy is the destruction of the socialist or at least *fidelista* experiment on the island, that is, the United States. The United States is not just another rival state, it is a superpower . . . *the* superpower.

In the past this was done through a sort of alliance with the Soviet Union but more so by the maintenance of a level of military strength that guaranteed that whatever the circumstances applying during an invasion, it would only prevail after the invaders had suffered severe losses and after some considerable time had elapsed. Thus an invasion would be both long and costly in lives. This combination has proved politically uninteresting to the United States in the long term and has, alongside often very reduced interest in general in that country for a military solution, ensured that no such invasion has taken place whatever the state of bilateral relations.

The means to achieve this were in large part the FAR before 1989 and entirely them since then. That alliance and those FAR are no longer there. What is left of the FAR, and the national mobilization and defence schemes they sustain, must now bear the burden with much less available in terms of manpower, money, training, equipment, weaponry, and even national unity in the face of the threat. It is a mammoth undertaking at the present time and the present time may well prove the one where the combination of political factors in the United States, and those and others in Cuba itself, make the need greatest for a functioning deterrent.

The United States is not likely to invade Cuba in the near future but such a scenario is more plausible than at any time in many years.

The need for the FAR to provide a deterrent is thus that much more important now. It has been argued here that the Pentagon is still essentially correct in its analysis that Cuba is not a threat to the United States and is not likely to become one. I believe that the strategic analysts in the U.S. Department of Defense are still correct in arguing that the Cuban armed forces remain capable of dealing a very sharp blow to any invasion at this time or in the near future. If that view continues to prevail, a military solution to the Cuban “problem” can probably be avoided, although a situation of internal disorder of scale on the island, one that called for intervention for humanitarian or related reasons, could overturn such calculations.

Thus, strong national forces in Cuba are a good thing. In my view they are such for Cuba because they ensure that Cubans will decide on the future of the island and not foreigners with all that other oft-applied option has meant for the tragic history of the country. They are such for the United States as well not only because they provide the regional superpower with the probability of a smoother political transition when events bring that about, but also because they ensure Washington has a responsible, efficient, and dependable partner for its legitimate security needs in the drugs, illegal immigration, and, I would argue, terrorism fields of concern; and last, it helps to ensure that the decision, in my view catastrophic for wider and longer-term U.S. policy interests, to invade Cuba is never made.

Many things have to change in Cuba. Reform is in the air but has to be brought to earth. And much of that reform must touch and in some cases reduce the influence of the FAR. But reform cannot occur in disorder, and the FAR acts as a brake on disorder. As argued earlier, the Cuban revolutionary armed forces are a great institution that has faced with originality and devotion the challenges of the Special Period. It can be proud of its record. That pride should allow the forces to open up more to the outside world. The current relative blindness is not a good thing in any sense. While having excellent strategic analysts it would be helpful for them to interact more often with others from around the world. The FAR are too important to remain cut off even when Cuba is so connected with so many countries.

My reflections are then those. The institution is worthy of more serious study than has been possible in a look back (and around) over the Special Period. But a more positive attitude to what is after all a *military* institution, and thus one at the service of the state but not the state itself whatever the level of links between the two, is necessary here. The visits of senior U.S. retired officers such as Generals Wilhelm and Sheehan have shown what many serving officers had

been saying in private for a long time—it is time to bury the hatchet and work together on major issues that affect both countries. Nowhere is this more true than in the security field.

Cuba is a dictatorship but one with a level of grassroots democracy that could be the envy of many Latin American “democracies” and some farther afield, and one with a social project of great legitimacy sorely missing in many states claiming both democratic status and concern for the well-being of their populations. Cuba is a “militarized” state in many senses but less not more so than in many other periods of its recent history despite the role of the FAR in the economy discussed at length here. It is not a “military dictatorship” in any form recognizable by theorists of such regimes, and so far attempts to put it into that “box” have failed because the complexities of the Cuban situation simply do not make apt such easy designations.

The FAR will finally be there in any transition scenario. They alone can hold the ring while that transition is sorted out and while popular expectations for rapid change (and improvement) are growing and ever more demanding. They alone have the legitimacy to fulfill this potential historic role in the crucial eyes of the U.S. military (with whom they could more easily deal than anyone else in the Cuban state apparatus), those of the Party faithful, those of the public at large who long for change but overwhelmingly for peaceful change, and even perhaps of emigrants abroad and youth at home.

It can then be seen that the FAR is central to the future of Cuba. I have known them in one form or another for 47 years and my study of them has made me feel that efforts should be made to get to know them better. They should allow this. It is in their interest. And they should get to know the world around them better once again. That is in everyone's interest. They should be assisted, not hindered, in this quest but they must decide to seriously embark on it.

Notes

Avant Propos

1. Robert L. Scheina, *Latin America's Wars: The Age of the Professional Soldier, 1900–2001*, vol. II, Washington, Brassey's, 2003, p. 227.
2. Even fierce critic Brigadier-General Rafael del Pino, Cuba's most senior military defector, said Cuban–Soviet military relations were “indifferent and at times antagonistic . . . They (the Soviets) do not have the slightest influence on the decisions the Cubans make.” Quoted in Jay Mallin, *History of the Cuban Armed Forces: From Colony to Castro*, Reston (Virginia), Ancient Mariners Press, 2000, p. 333. See also Raúl Marín, *¿La Hora de Cuba?*, Madrid, Editorial Revolución, 1991, pp. 61–62.
3. By 1988 women had reached half of the total graduates of Cuban Universities, a simply astounding figure for state or even private institutions in Latin America. Indeed, by as early as 1975, women in medicine had passed from 14% before the Revolution to 45%. See Marín, *¿La Hora de Cuba?*, p. 153.
4. Even Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Spanish author with no love for Fidel, has admitted that Cuba now has 60,000 doctors compared to its pre-1959 total of 3,000 (almost all in the prosperous western provinces of Havana and Matanzas) and has graduated some 600,000 people from university programs of reasonably high quality. See his *Y Dios entró en La Habana*, Madrid, Aguilar, 1998, p. 24.
5. Interview with Brigadier-General Harry Villegas Tamayo, in Mary Alice Waters, *Haciendo Historia: Entrevistas con cuatro generales de las Fuerzas armadas revolucionarias de Cuba*, New York, Pathfinder, 2001, p. 134.
6. Louis A. Pérez, Jr., “Fear and Loathing of Fidel Castro: Sources of US Policy toward Cuba,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 34 (2), May 2002, pp. 227–253, at p. 253.
7. C. Fred Judson, *Cuba and the Revolutionary Myth: The Political Education of the Cuban Rebel Army, 1953–1963*, Boulder, Westview, 1984, p. 242.
8. “Seremos siempre tripulantes del ‘Granma,’ ” *Granma*, December 1, 2001.

1 *Mambises Still? The Revolutionary Tradition in the Cuban Armed Forces*

1. It is difficult to exaggerate the power of this self-perception as the successors of the *mambises* is imbedded in the officer corps. See the interviews with Major Generals Néstor López Cuba and Enrique Carreras in Waters, 2001, p. 86.
2. Juan B. Amores, *Cuba y España, 1868–1898: el final de un sueño*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1998, pp. 35–52. See also Gloria García, *Conspiraciones y revueltas*, Santiago, Editorial Oriente, 2003.
3. The “Canadian solution” was the term coined to describe the very popular idea of following the Canadian model of “Dominion status” in order to gain full local rule but retain the protection of Spain in diplomacy and defense. See Mildred de la Torre, *El Autonomismo en Cuba, 1878–1898*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1997, p. 152.
4. Armando Ferrer Castro, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation and Revolution 1868–1898*, Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press, 1999, pp. 108–111, and Luis Navarro, *Las Guerras de España en Cuba*, Madrid, Ediciones Encuentro, 1998, pp. 112, 130–131.
5. Diana Abad, *De la Guerra Grande al Partido Revolucionario Cubano*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1995, pp. 207–209; and in John Kirk, *Jose Martí: Mentor of the Cuban Nation*, Tampa, University Presses of Florida, 1983, pp. 79–85.
6. See Jorge Ibarra, *Jose Martí: dirigente político o ideólogo revolucionario*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1980; and Antonio Martínez Bello, *Martí: antimperialista y conocedor del imperialismo*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1986.
7. Cuba, Centro de Información para la Defensa, *Lecturas de Historia Militar*, Havana, undated, p. 387. See also the detailed history given in Rafael Fermoselle, *The Evolution of the Cuban Military 1492–1986*, Miami, Ediciones Universal, 1987.
8. Francisco Pérez Guzmán, *La Aventura cubana de Colón*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1992, pp. 18–23.
9. See Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, New York, Harper and Row, 1971, pp. 1512–1513. For the higher figure see Eduardo Torres Cuevas and Oscar Loyola Vega, *Historia de Cuba, 1492–1898: Formación y liberación de la nación*, Havana, Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 2001, pp. 13–26.
10. For the best work on these people see Irving Rouse, *The Tainos*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992, especially pp. 136–178.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 1514–1516.
12. Francisco Pérez Guzmán, *La Habana: Clave de un imperio*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1993.
13. Cesar García del Pino, *El Corso en Cuba: Siglo XVII*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2001, pp. 9–38.

14. Francisco Castillo Meléndez, *La Defensa de la isla de Cuba en la segunda mitad del siglo XVII*, Sevilla, Padura, 1996.
15. Even though one speaks of the capture of Cuba, there was no such event. Havana fell and British rule was extended to most of the west of the island. But the center and east remained Spanish.
16. César García del Pino, *Toma de La Habana por los ingleses y sus antecedentes*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2002, pp. 91–116.
17. Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, p. 7. The militia was some 15,000 paper strength but only 3,000 were available against the British, and only 2,000 of these had arms.
18. See Allan J. Kuethe, *Cuba 1753–1815: Crown, Military and Society*, Memphis, University of Tennessee Press, 1986. For a case study of a closely connected colonial military experience, see Christon Archer, *The Army in Bourbon Mexico*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1977.
19. Jaime E. Rodríguez, *The Independence of Spanish America*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 7–14, 50–59.
20. This influential event is described in Ramón J. Sender, *Túpac Amaru*, Barcelona, Destino, 1973.
21. See Julio Mario Luqui Lagleyze, *El Ejército realista en la Guerra de Independencia*, Buenos Aires, Sanmartiniano, 1995.
22. Rodríguez, *The Independence of Spanish America*, pp. 107–168.
23. Humboldt remarks upon the exceptional merchant marine traffic of the port of Havana which in 1825 amounted to between 150,000 and 170,000 tons annually, an impressive figure indeed. In addition naval traffic was heavy with between 120 and 150 warships visiting the harbor in that year. See Alexander von Humboldt, *The Island of Cuba*, Kingston (Jamaica), Ian Randall Publishers, 2001, p. 180.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–41.
25. Just the two fortresses of El Morro and La Cabaña required 2,800 men as garrisons. Humboldt, *The Island of Cuba*, p. 82.
26. In the naval dockyard, the largest in the Americas, between two and three thousand laborers were employed although a good number of these were slaves. Torres Cuevas and Loyola Vega, *Historia de Cuba*, p. 93.
27. Gustavo Eguren, *La Fidelísima Habana*, Havana, Letras Cubanas, 1986.
28. See Jorge I. Domínguez, *Insurrección o lealtad: la desintegración del imperio español en América*, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985, for the overall story here as well as useful case studies.
29. Humboldt, *The Island of Cuba*, pp. 85–89.
30. Francisco O. Mota, *Piratas y corsarios en las costas de Cuba*, Madrid, Gente Nueva, 1984, pp. 96–99.
31. Margarita González, *Bolívar y la independencia de Cuba*, Bogotá, Ancora Editores, 1984.
32. Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, pp. 100–103, 204–206.

33. Quoted in M. Márquez Sterling, *La Diplomacia en nuestra historia*, Havana, Instituto del Libro, 1967, pp. 20–21 and 151–152; and in Ramiro Guerra, *Guerra de los Diez Años*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1974, vol. I, pp. 338–367, and vol. II, pp. 70–90.
34. The invaders had even had some success in interesting Giuseppe Garibaldi in their scheme. It appears, however, that the appeal of the plan never caught on with Italian adventurers. For the Italian role in such business, see Enrique Pertierra Serra, *Italianos por la libertad de Cuba*, Havana, Editorial José Martí, 2000, pp. 15–46.
35. For those in Cuba and Spain halting progress, see Maria del Carmen Barcia, *Élites y grupos de presión: Cuba 1868–1898*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1998.
36. Amores, *Cuba y España 1868–1898*, pp. 52–59.
37. Rodolfo Sarracino, *Inglaterra: sus dos caras en la lucha cubana por la abolición*, Havana, Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1986.
38. For a Marxist view of political debate in Spain over Cuba during this period see Aurea Matilde Fernández, *España y Cuba 1868–1898: revolución burguesa y relaciones coloniales*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1988, pp. 28–64.
39. Amores, *Cuba y España, 1868–1898*, pp. 61–63.
40. For the extraordinary story of Latin American attitudes and the two independence wars see Sergio Guerra Vilaboy, *América Latina y la independencia de Cuba*, Caracas, Ko'eyu, 1999. For the United States a good overview of issues is found in Ramón Guerra, *En el camino de la independencia*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1974; and, as seen above in the same author's *Guerra de los Diez Años*.
41. For the extraordinary story of this brilliant commander see Mary Cruz, *El Mayor*, Havana, Instituto Cubano del Libro, 1972.
42. As usual the debate on casualties is a heated one. See Amores, *Cuba y España, 1868–1898*, p. 104; and Torres-Cuevas and Loyola Vega, *Historia de Cuba*, p. 267.
43. Gonzalo Fernández Reyes, *Estrategia militar en la Guerra de los Diez Años*, Santiago de Cuba, Editorial Oriente, 1983, p. 29.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 35–38, and Amores, *Cuba y España, 1868–1898*, pp. 107–117.
45. Gómez was to write that while the Revolution's forces never included more than 7,000 Cubans apt for active service "in the Spanish ranks some 30,000 Cubans fought in defense of the metropolis," adding the characteristically caustic comment that this occurred while "the great majority (of Cubans) sat inactive in the towns giving resources to the Spanish and hoping that with their good wishes freedom would triumph." Quoted in Antonio Piralta Criado, *Historia contemporánea: Anales de la guerra civil*, vol. VI, Felipe González Rojas (Ed.), Madrid, 1895, p. 177, quoted in René González Barrios, *El Ejército español en Cuba 1868–1878*, Havana, Verde Olivo, 2000, p. 79.

46. See Jorge Ibarra Cuesta, "El Final de la Guerra de los Diez Años," *Revista Bimestre Cubana*, XCI, 16, January-June 2002, pp. 100-135, especially pp. 100-107.
47. Indeed, most of what the government heard in Madrid was the product of the *integrista* lobby, made up of Spaniards in the peninsula and on the island (as well as some Cubans) who opposed virtually any change in the colonial status of Cuba, which might hurt their interests. See A. M. Fernández, *España y Cuba 1868-1898*, pp. 131-163.
48. Amores, *Cuba y España, 1868-1898*, pp. 267-268.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 280-287.
50. Francisco Pérez Guzmán, *Herida profunda*, Havana, Ediciones Unión, 1999.
51. See the classic expression of this view throughout in Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, *Cuba no debe su independencia a los Estados Unidos*, Havana, Editorial La Tertulia, 1960.
52. For the diplomatic side of this, see Miguel D'Estéfano, *Dos siglos de diferendo entre Cuba y Estados Unidos*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2000, while for economic, social, and cultural elements Louis Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality and Culture*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
53. This is treated at several points in Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, especially pp. 443-446.
54. Jorge Ibarra Cuesta, *Máximo Gómez frente al imperio 1898-1905*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2000, pp. 69-70.
55. Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 11-12, from Orestes Ferrara, *Mis relaciones con Máximo Gómez*, Havana, Molina, 1942, pp. 221-222.
56. The main means to ensure that the very numerous black and mulatto veterans remained underrepresented in the Rural Guard was the requirement for new recruits to buy their own uniforms and mounts. Few could contemplate any such expense. See José M. Hernández, *Cuba and the United States: Intervention and Militarism, 1868-1933*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1997, pp. 109-115.
57. Marilú Uralde Cancio, "La Guardia Rural: un instrumento de dominación neocolonial (1898-1902)," in Mildred de la Torre et al., *La Sociedad cubana en los albores de la República*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2003, pp. 255-279 at p. 257.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 258.
59. This was even true in the tactics of the new army and Rural Guard. Within a few decades, Cuba's own guerrilla traditions and methods of fighting, proven effective in the independence wars, were not even taught at Cuban military schools. This was to cost the Batista government and forces dear. See the best work so far on the Batista army, Roberto Pérez Rivero, *Desventura de un ejército*, Santiago de Cuba, Editorial Oriente, 2003, pp. 91-92. See also Federico Chang, *El Ejército nacional en la República neocolonial 1899-1933*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1981. This does not mean that there was no maintaining of

progressive ideas. The defections of so many personnel from the Batista army, not to mention the special case of the naval mutiny in Cienfuegos, establish that beyond question.

60. Ibid., p. 257.
61. Aline Helg, *Lo que nos corresponde: la lucha de los negros y mulatos por la igualdad in Cuba 1886–1912*, Havana. Imagen Contemporánea, 2000. See also Silvia Castro Fernández, *La Masacre de los Independientes de Color en 1912*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2002.
62. Lars Schoultz, "The Blessings of Liberty: The United States and the Promotion of Democracy in Cuba," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, XXXIV, 2, May 2002, pp. 397–425, at pp. 404–405.
63. Zaballa Martínez, *La Artillería en Cuba en el siglo XX*. Havana, Verde Olivo, 2000.
64. Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, p. 680.
65. Elvira Díaz Vallina, "Prólogo," in María del Pilar Díaz Castañón (Ed.), *Ideología y revolución: Cuba 1959–1962*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2001, pp. IX–XVII, at p. XII.
66. This was *U-176*, sunk in the Florida Strait by Cuba's *CS 13* cooperating with anti-submarine aircraft. The naval transport *Libertad* was sunk in 1943 by a U-boat, thus ensuring that the Cuban navy saw rather more service and casualties in the war than did most Latin American navies. See English, *Armed Forces*, p. 210.
67. This context is well discussed in the early sections of Thomas G. Paterson, *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994.
68. This issue is handled in an interesting fashion by Claudia Furiati. *Fidel Castro: la historia me absolverá*, Barcelona, Plaza Janés, 2003, pp. 154–155.
69. Pérez Rivero, *Desventura*, emphasizes these faults and adds those of a leadership consistently underestimating their rebel enemy, unable to attract loyalty from its subordinates, lacking in personal example, and suffering from constant instability in its command structures and personnel. See especially pp. 221–227.
70. This point is nicely made in Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, pp. 26–27.
71. Essential reading in order to understand the extraordinary originality of the Cuban Revolution are Antoni Kapcia, *Cuba: Island of Dreams*, Oxford, Berg, 2000; and Louis Pérez, see footnote 58.
72. The importance of the fact that Fidel and Raúl spent their early lives in perhaps the most U.S.-dominated area of the whole island is often debated. Certainly it is true that the U.S. hold on the Bay of Nipe area was close to complete. See Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, pp. 803–809; and Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, pp. 99–100. Most of this section is taken from these two authors' treatment of Fidel's youth and character.

73. See the sections on Martí's social and political thought in Kirk, *José Martí*, pp. 65–131.
74. For the story of this party and of Chibás as political leader, see Elena Alavez Martín, *La Ortodoxia en el idcario americano*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2002.
75. Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, pp. 840–841. See also Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, p. 273.
76. Fidel Castro. *La Historia me absolverá*. Havana, Radio Habana Cuba Press, 1970.
77. Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, pp. 867, 876–890.
78. Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, pp. 355–356.
79. Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991.
80. There were two anti-tank guns, 90 rifles, three Thompson machine guns, 40 machine gun pistols, and other stores. See Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, p. 894.
81. Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, p. 375.
82. Cuba, Ministerio de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de la Republica de Cuba*, Havana, Editorial Orbe, 1976, pp. 28–29.
83. The story of this period of urban opposition to Batista is well told in Julia Sweig, *Inside the Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2002, pp. 12–47.
84. Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, pp. 407–410.
85. Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, pp. 996–998.
86. Cuba, *Fuerzas Armadas*, 1976, pp. 29–30.

2 The FAR up to the Special Period 1959–1990: The Third World's Most Impressive Armed Force?

1. The Revolutionary Directorate (in English) was founded by José Antonio Echeverría and the group of students he led at Havana University late in 1955. They were not part of the 26 de Julio movement and did not become so until after the 1959 victory. See Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, New York, William Morrow, 1986, pp. 344–345.
2. This is discussed in greater detail in Damián Fernández, "Historical Background: Achievements, Failures and Prospects," in Jaime Suchlicki (Ed.), *The Cuban Military under Castro*, Miami, University of Miami Press, 1989, pp. 1–26.
3. For these early years see Judson, *Cuba and the Revolutionary Myth*, pp. 225–228.

4. Luis M. Buch Rodríguez and Reinaldo Suárez Suárez, *Otros pasos del gobierno revolucionario cubano*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2002, pp. 90–92.
5. It is asserted that Fidel is the world's longest ruling head of state. Given the fiftieth Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in 2003 this assertion is less often made today. Her 50 years on the throne are clearly superior to the 44 years as head of state celebrated by Fidel in that same year. On the other hand, Fidel is of course also head of government and has been in all but name for the same period, surely a current record. It is almost certainly true that Raúl's 46 years as defense minister is a world record today and probably ranks alongside few others historically.
6. He could scarcely have imagined how prophetic those words were, and would need to be, for the future. See *ibid.*, p. 93.
7. See this throughout Peter Kornbluh (Ed.), *Bay of Pigs Declassified: The Secret CIA Report on the Invasion of Cuba*, New York, The New Press, 1998.
8. For a recent Cuban view of the Bay of Pigs, see Juan Carlos Rodríguez, *The Bay of Pigs: The Bay of Pigs and the CIA*, Melbourne, Ocean Press, 1999.
9. The military system since the Revolution has not strayed far from standard practice in the designation of its component parts. There has been a regular army, successor to the Rebel Army, which won the revolutionary war. There was early on a people's militia, part time soldiers who had other jobs but who volunteered for training, and for full time service in case of crisis. These forces evolved reserves, essentially those personnel who had already served their conscripted service period and were then available for service in time of emergency and usually liable to periodic refresher training. The Youth Labour Army (EJT) is a full-time body of young people, who would normally be doing full blown military training as part of their conscripted service, but who instead serve as members of formed units tasked with assisting in labor of a nonmilitary kind, especially agriculture. The Territorial Militias, formed in the early 1980s, are again volunteers who have other jobs but who serve part time, training to take on their wartime role if needed.
10. Yuri Pavlov, *The Soviet-Cuban Alliance, 1959–1991*, Miami, North-South Center Press, 1996, pp. 83–88.
11. Castro had of course early on after the Revolution's "triumph" sent advisers and other help to Algeria and to some other African Left-leaning governments.
12. Piero Gleijeses, *Misiones en conflicto: La Habana, Washington y África 1959–1976*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2002, pp. 335–345.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
14. Gleijeses, *Misiones en conflicto*, pp. 346–391; for a description of some of the action, see César Gómez Chacón, *Cuito Cuanavale: Viaje al centro de los héroes*, Havana, Letras Cubanas, 1989.

15. Fidel's likely doubts about the dependability of the Soviets in the late 1970s and early 1980s are discussed in a variety of sources. Of particular interest here are the conclusions of Eusebio Mujal-León and Joshua W. Busby in their "Las fuerzas armadas en las transiciones: lecciones para Cuba," *Encuentro de la cultura cubana*, XXVI/XXVII, autumn/winter 2002–2003, pp. 127–132 and especially pp. 130–131.
16. Mora, "Raul Castro and the FAR," p. 7.
17. Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, p. 647.
18. These figures come from what is perhaps the best single work on the early years of the "Special Period," Homero Campo and Orlando Pérez's *Cuba: los años duros*, Mexico, Plaza y Janés, 1997, pp. 14–15.
19. Josep Colomer, e.g., in a recent study puts the FAR's strength at 55,000, down from 297,000, its steady figure in much of the 1980s and 1990s and one still applying in 1991. See his «Los Militares "duros" y la transición en Cuba,» *Encuentros de la cultura cubana*, XXVI/XXVII, autumn–winter 2002–2003, pp. 148–167 especially p. 159.
20. It should be noted that some important observers of the Cuban scene have suggested that the cuts in FAR strength were not entirely the result of the desire to make savings. Veteran analyst Antoni Kapcia suggests that they were at least in part the "need to send signals to Washington that a less military Cuba is willing to make concessions to reduce any perceived 'threat' to regional stability." See Antoni Kapcia, "Political Change in Cuba: Before and After the Exodus," London, University of London Institute of Latin American Studies, Occasional Paper No. 9, 1995, p. 20.
21. *El Sol de México*, "Más vale frijoles que cañones: Raúl Castro Ruz" (interview with Raúl Castro), April 21, 1993.
22. Ibid. Cuts in fuel continued for some time with some units down to roughly 10% of their 1989 allocation four years later. It has been suggested by one expert that the overall allocation for 1993 was perhaps 30% of its total of four years before. See A. B. Montes, "The Military Response to Cuba's Economic Crisis," Washington, Defense Intelligence Agency, 1993, p. 21.
23. At least to some extent making a virtue of necessity, General Jorge Romero Alonso in an interview spoke of the ability to reduce the time of service as a success of the Revolution, in the sense that now Cuban youth were better educated, with more technicians, professional people, and qualified workers among them, and thus not so many of them were needed. He emphasized as well how the troops were all back from abroad and that women serving in the forces were much more numerous through the SMVF (*Servicio Militar Voluntario Femenino* or Feminine Volunteer Military Service) scheme. The general also spoke of new roles and of the FAR as more than ever a school for the nation's youth. At the same time he promised that the armed forces would support worthy young personnel in their university or technical college educations after their two-year periods of service were

completed. See César Gómez Chacón, "Una prueba de confianza," *Granma*, April 4, 1991, p. 3.

24. *El Sol de México*, "Somos los más antidroga del mundo: Raúl Castro Ruz," interview, April 23, 1993, p. 20.
25. Sweig, *Inside the Cuban Revolution*, pp. 124–126.
26. Colomer, "Los Militares," p. 151. Colomer further observes: "The organization of the Party in the army is not only dominated by military officers but also one's rank in the FAR determines the position one occupies in the Party."

3 The Blows: The FAR Alone in a Cruel World

1. The expression "special period" had long been a part of contingency planning for wartime for the FAR and Cuba as a whole. But this had formally been in the context of a "special period in time of war." Thus Cubans were accustomed to envisaging a period that would be special but it would be so in terms of a military struggle for national survival. Fidel of course played on this familiarity in the sense of a call on the public to defend the nation and the Revolution through its sacrifices with the adjustment that they would be in peacetime and not in wartime and that they would be more economic than military. The military's assistance to the 10-million ton great sugar harvest of 1969–1970 was also under a mobilization of the sort planned for wartime. See *Granma*, November 16, 1969; and Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, p. 1458.
2. Quoted in Marín, *¿La Hora de Cuba?*, p. 10.
3. Domingo Amuschastegui, "Cuba's Armed Forces: Power and Reforms," *Cuba in Transition*, IX, Washington, Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, 1999, p. 113. See also Brian Latell, "The Military in Cuba's Transition," unpublished paper, August 2002, pp. 16–17.
4. Indeed, in Fidel's own dramatic personal intervention in the riots he apparently gave express orders that under no circumstances were the security forces to open fire. See Furiati, *Fidel Castro: la historia me absolverá*, Barcelona, Plaza Janés, 2003, pp. 578–579.
5. See, e.g., Susan Kaufmann Purcell, "Cuba's Cloudy Future," *Foreign Affairs*, summer 1990, pp. 113–130.
6. Fidel said, "the fortifying of defense is among the priority programs of the Special Period and it is one of those sacrifices that we will inexorably have to make." Fidel Castro, *Un grano de maíz: conversación con Tomás Borja*, Havana, Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, 1992, p. 148.
7. See Richard Millett, "Cuba's Armed Forces: from Triumph to Survival," Cuba Briefing Paper Series No. 4, September 1993, pp. 1–14.
8. See the Cuban chapter of English, *Armed Forces*, pp. 195–220.
9. The best work on this subject is doubtless Pavlov, *The Soviet–Cuban Alliance*.

10. This is well dealt with in the series of chapters in Rafael Hernández, *La Otra guerra*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1999.
11. This is discussed in Jaime Suchlicki (Ed.), *The Cuban Military under Castro*, Miami, University of Miami, 1989, pp. 70–79.
12. The *Manual Básico del Miliciano de tropas territoriales*, Havana, Editorial Orbe, 1981, is a valuable resource, widely available, on how the system worked.
13. “Cannibalization” is the term given to the practice of stripping a piece of equipment or weapon of some of its parts in order to maintain a limited number of such working. Thus, in order to keep one tank or armored personnel carrier or aircraft functioning, several may need to be “cannibalized” for required spare parts.
14. Rafael Hernández, “El Hemisferio y Cuba: una postdata crepuscular a la cumbre de las Américas,” *Cuadernos de Nuestra América*, XII, 24, July–December 1995, pp. 71–80, p. 79.
15. Interview with General Orlando Almaguel Vidal in Luis Báez, *Secretos de Generales*, Barcelona, Losada, 1997, pp. 234–247, especially pp. 244–246.
16. See *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, Havana, January 13, 1995, pp. 1–14, especially pp. 2–10.
17. Interview with General Almaguel Vidal, in Báez, *Secretos de Generales*, Barcelona, Losada, 1997, p. 245.
18. One very positive assessment is that of a highly respected specialist on Cuba. See Kapcia, *Cuba: Island of Dreams*, p. 239.
19. H. Michael Erisman, *Cuba's Foreign Relations in a Post-Soviet World*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2000, pp. 79–104.
20. For interesting comparisons see Arnoldo Brenes and Kevin Casas, *Soldiers as Businessmen: The Economic Activities of Central American Militaries*, San José, Arias Foundation, 1998.
21. Interview with General Enrique Carreras in Waters, *Haciendo Historia*, pp. 59–90.
22. The new soldier or officer on joining the FAR swears allegiance to the flag.
23. I refer here to the oft-mentioned situation on the island where even highly trained professionals such as doctors, university professors, teachers, sports coaches, researchers, and lawyers find that their incomes need to be combined with or even replaced by ones coming from activities related to tourism and especially tipping. Thus, one sees such people abandoning their normal employment to work as elevator operators, taxi drivers, tour operators, bellboys, and the like. In the latter they can often earn many times what they would or do make as professionals in their fields. Officers could do the same. Indeed, in some fields of military activity related to tourism these lucky few currently do share these advantages with their frustrated and hard-pressed civilian colleagues from the professions.
24. Millett, “Cuba’s Armed Forces,” pp. 5–6.

25. This is traced, if in a highly critical fashion, in Mallin, *History of the Cuban Armed Forces*, pp. 125–320.
26. The Cuban Adjustment Act allowed that any Cuban arriving on U.S. soil would automatically be able to stay, a situation fraught with problems for future immigration policy, and which stimulated Cuban emigration in ways unknown in the rest of Latin America. For an interesting view of this story, see Ernesto Rodríguez Chávez, *Emigración cubana actual*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1997.
27. This is elaborated more fully in this author's "Confidence Building and the Cuba–United States Confrontation," Ottawa, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, International Security Research Paper, March 2000, pp. 24–26.
28. Marc Frank, "Former U.S. Drug Tsar Meets Castro in Cuba," Havana, Reuters, March 3, 2002.
29. There had apparently been some incidents, and some of these with potential for becoming serious, in the years 1989–1994. See the interview with Brigadier-General José Solar Hernández, commander of the *Brigada de la Frontera* (Frontier Brigade) for much of that time, in Báez, *Secretos de Generales*, pp. 277–278.
30. Charles Heyman (Ed.), *Jane's World Armies*, Coulsdon (UK), 2001, p. 190.
31. During the cold war, Soviet divisions were termed as A, B, or C. "A" divisions had their full wartime strength and equipment scales, "B" divisions considerably fewer of both men and weapons and equipment, and "C" were skeletal formations maintained at minimal levels of readiness, with only the men and equipment necessary for them to mobilize over time. They were not expected to be fully operational without a significant period of preparation, manning, and equipping.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
33. International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1988–9*, London, IISS/Brassey's, 1989.
34. *Granma*, series of articles on "Bastion 2004," November–December, 2004.

4 "The Proof is in the Pudding": The FAR and the Economy

1. There is an interesting American contemporary account of these zones in Grover Flint, *Marchando con Gómez*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2002, pp. 202–216.
2. Szulc, *Fidel: A Classical Portrait*, p. 76.
3. The Party would of course soon help with the tasks at hand. But the army was the key actor at this time. See most of the early sections of the interviews in Báez, *Secretos de Generales*, where the generals speaking address the breadth of the demands made on them, as junior officers, over these years.
4. This is a repeatedly made point by the generals interviewed in Báez, *Secretos de Generales*.

5. Even in the 1970s a military role in agricultural production was retained. but it was clearly shifted to the reserves. In 1973, the Youth Labor Army (EJT) was founded largely to operate as a labour pool for the country in the agricultural field.
6. Here again, at the risk of being repetitive, it is essential to keep in mind that even in this era of relative professionalism the FAR were never separated entirely from a role in the economy. See the list of dates of founding of several FAR-linked enterprises in Domingo Amuchástegui, "Las FAR: del poder absoluto al control de las reformas," *Encuentro con la cultura cubana*, XXVI/XXVII, autumn–winter 2002–2003, pp. 133–147, especially pp. 140–141.
7. Poor economic performance is likely to have been partly a result of the growth in the size and deployments of the FAR. In the 1970s, the armed forces budget grew much faster than did the economy as a whole. See Susan Eckstein, *Back to the Future: Cuba under Castro*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 198.
8. Amuchástegui, "Las FAR," pp. 143–147 especially pp. 134–135.
9. Latell, "The Military," p. 14.
10. Amuchástegui, "Las FAR," p. 135.
11. Raúl seemed more impressed than Fidel with the Chinese. See Amuchástegui, "Las FAR," p. 18.
12. "Business Perfecting," or "business improvement." For a description of the meaning of the term in the Cuban context, see Rafel Alhama Belamaric et al., *Perfeccionamiento empresarial: realidades y retos*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2001.
13. See Juan Carlos Espinosa, "Vanguard of the State: the Cuban Armed Forces in the Transition," in *Problems of Communism*, XLVIII, 6, November/December 2001, p. 23, and Latell, "The Military," p. 15.
14. Interview with Major-General Luis Pérez Róspide in Waters, *Haciendo Historia*, p. 53.
15. Furiati, *Fidel Castro*, p. 571.
16. Interviews with Cuban economists, August, 2002.
17. UIM can be referred to in English as UME, Union of Military Enterprises.
18. Interview with General Luis Pérez Róspides, quoted in Báez, *Secretos de Generales*, p. 256.
19. Báez, *Secretos de Generales*.
20. Ibid., p. 257.
21. Ibid.
22. As usual such figures can be tricky. See Frank Mora, "Raul Castro and the FAR: Potential Future Roles in a Post-Fidel Cuba," unpublished paper, 2002, p. 17 and Latell, "The Military," p. 19.
23. In "national coin" or currency.
24. This chapter includes little on agriculture as that subject is dealt with at various times in the text in the context of the Youth Labor Army or EJT.

25. Interview with Major-General Ulises Rosales del Toro in Báez, *Secretos de Generales*, p. 574.
26. The term *central* is used for the modern sugar refinery, a major expansion of the traditional, more small-scale sugar production centers of Cuba formerly known as *ingenios*. See Fe Iglesias, *Del Ingenio al central*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1999.
27. See again the work of Amuchástegui, "Las FAR," pp. 140–142 for a brief sketch of "who's who" as of mid-2002.
28. If one is to believe Brigadier-General Orlando Almaguel Vidal, despite the enormous difficulties of the crisis, the reserves for war have not been touched. See interview with him in Báez, *Secretos de Generales*, p. 246.
29. Interview with Brigadier-General Moisés Sio Wong, in Báez, *Secretos de Generales*, pp. 488–489.
30. Interview with senior Cuban economist, August 2002.
31. See Vázquez Montalbán, *Y Dios*, p. 179; and a number of the thoughts on these matters in the interviews of generals in Báez, *Secretos de Generales*.
32. Cathy Booth, "Fidel's Brother Sets up Shop," *Time*, November 14, 1994, pp. 40–41.
33. Vázquez Montalbán, *Y Dios*, p. 130.
34. On this matter, see Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Are Economic Reforms Propelling Cuba to the Market?*, Miami, North-South Center Press, 1994, p. 70.
35. The literal translation would be "small town, big hell."
36. Interview with Major-General Enrique Carrera in Báez, *Secretos de Generales*, p. 79. See also in the same volume the interview with Brigadier-General José Ramón Fernández, where he reaches similar conclusions, *Secretos de Generales*, p. 101.
37. The *paladar* is a legal, family-owned restaurant working under severe restrictions but able to operate independently of the state. *Casas privadas* are family-run rooms or houses that are rented out to foreigners on the same independent basis.
38. Few senior officers would deny entirely the problem. The head of civil defense, Brigadier-General Juan Escalona Reguera, speaks to it as a new phenomenon but one with which it is necessary to deal as a priority. See Báez, *Secretos de Generales*, p. 508.
39. Important Cuban economists believe this to be the case. See Carranza Valdez, ex-deputy director of the Centro de Estudios de Américas, in Abel Gilbert, *Cerca de La Habana: crónicas cubanas*, Buenos Aires, Grupo Editorial Norma, 1997, pp. 71–71. And for agriculture see Kápica, "Political Change," p. 21.
40. See the clarifications given by Fidel Castro to Ernesto Guevara's *Informe del Dr. Ernesto Guevara, Ministro de Industrias a la Reunión Nacional de Producción*, quoted in María Del Pilar Díaz Castañón, *Ideología y revolución: Cuba 1959–1962*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2001, pp. 270–272.

41. These figures for elements of the state budget come from the 1995–2004 annual reports produced by Cuba, Oficina Nacional de Estadística, *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba*. As with virtually all state figures given in Latin America, and especially those related to defense, they should be taken with more than just a grain of salt. However, it is undeniable that the gross trends they suggest did take place and this is of great importance for the thrust of the argument here. For more on Cuban state budgets see Omar Everleny Pérez Villanueva, “La Administración del presupuesto del estado cubano: una valoración,” in Everleny, “La Administración,” pp. 19–40.
42. Interview with Vice-Admiral Pedro Pérez Betancourt, in Báez, *Secretos de Generales*, 1996, pp. 139–140.
43. This also needs *nuance*. All sources agree that currently military hospitals are taking on a large number of civilian cases as part of the general effort to assist the country in the face of the crisis in the availability of medical facilities and medicines.

5 The FAR and the United States: Confidence Building in Limited but Important Sectors

1. Parts of this chapter appeared in my “Confidence-Building and the Cuba–U.S. Confrontation,” Ottawa, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, International Security. Research Paper, March 2000. I am grateful for the permission of the ministry to include those sections in this chapter.
2. Cuba describes U.S. activity against it as a constant repetition of “conspiracies, assassination attempts, banditry, terrorism, piracy, politico-ideological diversionism, sabotage, kidnapping and commercial blockade.” The United States describes the Castro government as totalitarian, repressive, dictatorial and much more, recently defining Cuba through Otto Reich as “a failed state, led by a brutal dictator.” For the United States see the series of Reich’s statements made during his summer 2003 tour of the West Indies. For Cuba, see MININT, *Las Reglas del juego: 30 años de la seguridad del estado*, Havana, Editorial Capitán San Luis, 1992, p. vii.
3. James Macintosh, *Confidence (and Security) Building Measures: A Canadian Perspective*, Ottawa, Department of External Affairs, Arms Control and Disarmament Study No. 1, 1985, pp. 64–65. See the evolution of his views in *Confidence Building in the Arms Control Process: A Transformation View*, Ottawa, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1996.
4. CBMs in Latin America had not received a great deal of attention until recent years and the work done by Jack Child and written or stimulated by Francisco Rojas at FLACSO Chile. There is also, in English, Jill Junola and Michael Krepon (Eds.), *Regional Confidence Building in 1995: South Asia, the Middle East and Latin America*, Washington, Stimson Center, 1995.

5. "The Floridas" (East and West) referred at this time not only to the area of that state as we know it today but also to the coastal territories of the other current states along the Gulf of Mexico between Louisiana and today's Florida.
6. Philip S. Foner, *A History of Cuba*, New York, International Publishers, 1962, pp. 43–44.
7. Cuban historians enjoy pointing out that much of this assistance was in fact provided by Cubans under the Spanish flag. For example, it was a Cuban-born officer who led the expedition that briefly took The Bahamas from the British in 1781, and it was largely Cuban troops who took Mobile the year before. It is equally true that Havana became a major source of funds and supplies for the rebels well before war began formally and that much of the force that took Florida was composed of Cuban militiamen. See Torres-Cuevas and Loyola Vega, *Historia de Cuba 1492–1898*, pp. 120–123.
8. For a detailed study from the Cuban perspective of these years see the early chapters of D'Estéfano Pisani, *Dos Siglos de difrendo entre Cuba y Estados Unidos*.
9. This is well discussed in Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, p. 222.
10. See the handling of this subject in David Y. Thomas, *A History of Military Government in the United States*, London, Columbia University Press, 1904, p. 45.
11. An interesting work on this is José Luciano Franco Fernán, *Política continental americana de España, 1812–1830*, Havana, Academia de Ciencias, 1964.
12. The subject of U.S. policy toward Cuba before 1898 reflects this. See D'Estéfano Pisani, *Dos Siglos*.
13. This is well traced in the early chapters Márquez Sterling, *La Diplomacia*.
14. Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, pp. 464–470.
15. Marilá Uralde Cancio, «La Guardia Rural: un instruments de dominación neocolonial,» in Mildrei de la Torre (Ed.), *La Sociedad cubana en los labores de la República*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2002, p. 258; and 1902–1958 chapters of Fermoselle, *The Evolution*.
16. Elements of purely "electoral democracy" did of course exist and on occasion more impressive democratic credentials for the regime could be seen in embryo. However, even with the Prio Socarras and Grau governments the realities of Cuban political life had little of a real democracy or even of a republic in the sense of a self-governing state under a regime where the public weal was the business of a significant part of the legislature. Thus I do not find the revolutionary term of "pseudo-republic" inapplicable.
17. Louis Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality and Culture*, Chapel Hill, University: North Carolina Press, 1999, pp. 166–198.

18. Indeed, it was that wartime alliance in World War I that brought the Cuban army onto a larger and more professional basis. The war began with the force standing at an official 10,915 all ranks establishment with a reality short of that. By the end of the wartime reforms of the institution it stood at 17,178 and on a much more "real" basis. These troops could formally be raised by conscription but the opposition of the upper classes to the possibility that their sons might have to serve ensured that this remained a moot point. See Fermoselle, *The Evolution*, pp. 132–133.
19. For some elements of this see Leslie Bethell, *Cuba: A Short History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 78–79; and English, *Armed Forces*, in the national section of the Cuban chapter of the work.
20. Kapcia, *Cuba: Island of Dreams*, helps us understand this. See also Joel James Figarola, *Alcance de la cubanía*, Santiago de Cuba, Editorial Oriente, 2001.
21. For an interesting look at the bilateral relationship for the whole of the second Batista regime and the first quarter century and more of Fidel, see Morris Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution: The United States and Cuba, 1952–1986*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.
22. See a Russian perspective on this in Pavlov, *The Soviet–Cuban Alliance 1959–1991*, pp. 6–26.
23. Cuba of course denies the existence of such a phase of its policy. Fidel has spoken often about the subject. In Cuban discourse it is referred to as "active defense" or is even denied altogether. Even the legendary Che said his writings on guerrilla warfare were much more intended for defensive operations by Cuba in resisting a U.S. invasion than they were for the instruction of those taking revolutionary ideas abroad. See Paul Dosal, *Comandante Che: Guerrilla Soldier, Commander, and Strategist, 1956–1967*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003, pp. 20–22.
24. There is a great deal of recent work on the Bay of Pigs expedition. The work of Kornbluh, *Bay of Pigs*, is among the best.
25. See the Cuban argument in Carlos A. Batista Odio, "Bloqueo, no embargo," in Carlos Batista Odio et al., *El conflicto Cuba–Estados Unidos*, Havana, Editorial Félix Varela, 1998, pp. 38–48.
26. United States Department of State, *Department of State Bulletin*, LXXVII, December 5, 1977, p. 2006.
27. Smith, Wayne, *The Closest of Enemies*, New York, Norton, 1987, pp. 124–169.
28. The honesty of U.S. policy in this regard is now much questioned as a result of the work of Piero Gleijeses, *Misiones en conflicto*, which appears to demolish much received wisdom on this period.
29. See Szulc, *Fidel: A Classical Portrait*, pp. 646–648.
30. It is possible to debate this. Four U.S. airmen were killed over the Bay of Pigs in the invasion fiasco of 1961. See Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, p. 1368.

31. And even though it is painful for the left to admit it, there is also much to the rightist view that the Reagan military challenge to the USSR could simply not be met by what had been really a mere superpower *par courtoisie*.
32. This process is discussed in one fashion or another in the various chapters of Bert Hoffmann (Ed.), *Cuba: apertura y reforma económica*, Caracas, Nueva Sociedad, 1995. An interesting overview of why and how this series of processes took place is given in the analysis of Hiram Marquetti Nodarse, "La Empresa cubana: principales retos que enfrenta," in Mercedes Sánchez et al., *Gerencia: del proposito a la acción*, Havana, Editorial Félix Varela, 2002, pp. 169–188.
33. It is important to keep in the mind the speed of this disintegration process. Virtually no one had foreseen these events. And even Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, the most famous and timely exception to this blindness, thought the process would take longer and be less dramatic. See her *L'Empire éclaté*, Paris, Flammarion, 1978.
34. For example it seems almost incredible that a Latin America watcher as sophisticated as Andrés Oppenheimer could choose, or at least accept, for the title of a major work on Fidel and the Cuban Revolution in 1992, *Castro's Final Hour*. The assumption that the Cuban Revolution would fall as easily as did socialist regimes in Eastern Europe when most of the latter had been put in place by Soviet bayonets, and had held on for often the same reason, was so unfounded as to be simply ridiculous. The Cuban Revolution can be criticized for many things but not as an illegitimate or unnatural outgrowth of the national experience.
35. For this story see Morris Morley and Chris McGillion, *Unfinished Business: America and Cuba after the Cold War, 1989–2001*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 33–39.
36. These figures, and many others of interest, come from the last chapters of Luis Suarez Salazar, *Cuba: ¿aislamiento o reinserción en un mundo cambiado?*, Havana, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1997.
37. For Latin American and other reaction to Helms Burton see Joaquín Roy, *Cuba, the United States and the Helms-Burton Doctrine: International Reactions*, Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 2000.
38. This does not apply to missions in the former republics of the USSR where special circumstances, related to a retained Russian role in some of these republics, are in place. For example, Cuba for years maintained four observers with the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). See Neil Macfarlane, "La Communauté des États indépendants et la sécurité régionale," in Michel Fortmann, Neil Macfarlane, and Stéphane Roussel (Eds.), *Tous pour un ou chacun pour soi: promesses et limites de la coopération régionale en matière de sécurité*, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1996, pp. 181–194; and International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1997/8*, London, Oxford University Press, p. 215.

39. Indeed, acceptance of all these instruments had to await the autumn of 2002.
40. Pierre Queuille, *L'Amérique latine, la doctrine Monroe et le panaméricanisme*, Paris, Payot, 1969; or G. Pope Atkins, *Latin America in the International Political System*, Boulder, Westview, 1995. And for the inter-American system Rodolfo Garrié Faget, *Organismos militares interamericanos*, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Depalma, 1968; and Hugo Garrié Faget, *Organismos militares interamericanos*, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Depalma, 1968; and Hugo Luis Cargnelutti, *Seguridad interamericana ¿un subsistema del sistema interamericano?*, Buenos Aires, Círculo Militar, 1993.
41. In current international relations jargon, the term "intermestic" was invented in order to express something that is both an international and a domestic issue.
42. This is discussed in a useful way in Milagros Martínez Reinosa and Jorge Hernández Martínez, "¿Alternativas políticas en la inmigración cubana?" *Cuadernos de Nuestra América*, XII, 23, January–June 1995, pp. 33–47.
43. "Miami" intransigence can backfire. The Elián González controversy, where the bulk of the U.S. public backed the boy's return to Cuba and his next of kin and rejected entirely the "view from Miami," is a case in point. See Carlos Alzugaray, "Cuba y los Estados Unidos en los umbrales del siglo XXI: perspectivas de cooperación," *Cuadernos de Nuestra América*, XV, 29, January–June 2002, pp. 49–76.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
45. See Francisco Rojas Aravena (Ed), *Medidas de confianza mutua: verificación*, Santiago, FLACSO, 1996; and his *Balance estratégico y medidas de confianza mutua*, Santiago, FLACSO, 1996.
46. Significant levels of migration from Cuba into the U.S. date to the Ten Years' War or even earlier. Disorder or war on the island has since then always produced some sort of exodus to the closest, arguably most welcoming, richest, and most democratic of the island's neighboring countries. Even in peacetime the connections between the two countries' societies have been reinforced since the nineteenth century by everything from migrant workers to the "exiles" looking for better living conditions who cross the Florida Straits today.
47. Joint Communiqué between the United States and Cuba concerning Normalizing Migration Procedures, *US State Department Consolidated Treaties and International Agreements*, Washington, 1994, pp. 301–304.
48. This is not to deny the important clarifications of the degree of militarization of the issue made in the important work by Bruce Bagley, "Los mitos de la militarización: las fuerzas armadas en la guerra contra las drogas," in Peter H. Smith (Ed.), *El Combate a las drogas en América*, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993. This assessment is based on official U.S. sources. See for example U.S. State Department, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, Washington, 2005.

49. Cuban nervousness on this score is understandable. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan stated that "there is strong evidence that Castro officials are involved in the drug trade, peddling drugs like criminals, profiting on the misery of the addicted." See Mallin, *History of the Cuban Armed Forces*, p. 350. In the context of what many saw at the time as the militarizing of the U.S. response to the illegal narcotics trade this was reason enough for Havana to worry. The Ochoa case must be seen in part in this context. See Armando Ferrer Castro, *Conexión en Cuba: la historia de la poderosa red de funcionarios cubanos con el narcotráfico internacional*, Mexico City, Planeta, 1990.
50. Arias Fernández, *Cuba contra el narcotráfico: de víctimas a centinelas* Havana, Editora Política, 2001, pp. 70–72.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 23–39.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
54. The debate on the full significance of the Ochoa trials, and their impact on the armed forces and MININT, still rages with still no clear idea of government motivations. What is clear is that there was high-level wrongdoing but there may well have been also major differences within groups of the high command about where the Revolution should be heading in the light of events in the USSR. See, e.g., Colomer, "Los Militares," pp. 152–157, where that author considers the trials "a warning" by Fidel to those who might be tempted to look at another solution to leadership questions and "whither Cuba."
55. See Peter D. Scott and John Marshall, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies and the CIA in Central America*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991, pp. 102–103; and Enrique A. Meltin Casas, "Cuba en la política antidrogas de Estados Unidos," in Batista Odio, "Bloqueo, no embargo," pp. 208–225.
56. "Politics—Cuba: Worried about Drugs," International Press Service, October 5, 1998.
57. Arias Fernández, *Cuba contra el narcotráfico*, pp. 78–79.
58. See D'Estéfano Pisani, *Dos Siglos*, pp. 378–379.
59. It was not helpful that a well-placed defense worker, Ana Beleu Montes, was arrested and convicted for espionage for Cuba during these months.
60. "Against terrorism and against war."
61. "Statement delivered by H. E. Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, at the General Debate of the 57th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 14 September 2002," News Release of the Embassy of Cuba, Ottawa, September 15, 2002, p. 2.
62. See Anya Landau and Wayne Smith, "Keeping Things in Perspective: Cuba and the Question of International Terrorism," Washington, Center for International Policy, November 20, 2001, in <http://www.ciponline.org/cuba/ipr/keepingthingsinperspective.pdf>.

63. In fact, of course, Fidel has rarely put the base question forward in issues with the United States. An exception was during his attempt to influence the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. But generally this “pedazo de tierra estéril” (piece of sterile land), as he once called it, has not been allowed to poison moments when major issues of state have been at stake. See Cuba, MINFAR, *Fuerzas armadas*, pp. 164–165.
64. Declau McCullagh, “Feds say Fidel is Hacter Threat,” Washington, Wired Digital, February 9, 2001.
65. Ibid.
66. “Track II” is an informal term used to describe contacts between actors within rival states, but not between governments; contacts that attempt to build confidence or at least reduce negative perceptions between the two opponents.
67. The King was to have made two visits, one in connection with his attendance at the Ibero-American Summit of that year, and the other a state visit. The first occurred but difficulties between the Aznar government and Fidel, ostensibly over the trial of the “Group of Four” dissidents, soon made a state visit unlikely. It has as yet occurred although the sympathy King Juan Carlos has for Fidel Castro, as well as his own desire to visit formally the island, is common knowledge. See Vázquez Montalván, *Y Dios entro' en La Habana*, p. 489; and Suárez Salazar, *Cuba: zaislamiento o reinserción en un mundo cambiado?*, p. 244.
68. See Arias Fernández, *Cuba contra el narcotráfico*, and “Automatizan radar de Punta del Este,” in *Grauma*, August 5, 2002.
69. Intr-American Dialogue, *The Environment in U.S.–Cuban Relations: Recommendations of Cooperation*, Washington, Inter-American Dialogue, 1997. See also Alzugaray, “Cuba y los,” p. 65.
70. The relatively long history of Cuban baseball, and the relationship of the game in that country and in the United States, is itself fascinating. See Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, pp. 77–83, 273–276.
71. Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque refers to Cason’s “open violations of the laws governing diplomatic conduct, by openly interfering in Cuba’s internal affairs . . . [the] diplomatic pouch is being increasingly used to bring funds and the means to for the exercise of counterrevolutionary acts . . .,” in his press conference in April 2003 at the end of the trials. See Cuba, “We Are Not Prepared to Renounce Our Sovereignty” (Press Conference by Foreign Minister of the Republic of Cuba Felipe Pérez Roque), Havana, Editora Política, 2003, p. 6.
72. The accusations of Cuba, made so forcefully by the U.S. government in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, and then repeated when explanations were made by officials as to why Cuba was retained on the “black list” of terrorist states or those supporting terrorism, have been kept in being since.
73. See the excellent opening chapter of Lars Schoultz, *National Security and United States Policy towards Latin America*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987.

74. These issues are discussed in several of the chapters of the highly interesting David Dewitt et al. (Eds.), *Building a New Global Order: Emerging Trends in International Security*, Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1993; and for Latin America in particular in Enrique Obando, *Nuevas amenazas a la seguridad y relaciones civiles-militares en un mundo en desorden*, Lima, Centro Peruano de Estudios Internacionales, 1994.
75. See this and related issues in the U.S. sections of Peter H. Smith, *Drug Policy in the Americas*, Boulder, Westview, 1992.
76. Christopher Marquis, "Pentagon want U.S. Military to Work with Cuba," *The Miami Herald*, February 21, 1998.
77. Christopher Marquis, "Report Downplaying Cuba Threat Back to Review," *The Miami Herald*, April 8, 1998.
78. Anthony Boodle, "Cuban Military No Threat, Turns to Farming," *The Miami Herald*, March 31, 1998.
79. Christopher Marquis, "Cuba Still No Threat, Pentagon Insists but Defense Chief Tempers Report," *The Miami Herald*, May 7, 1998.
80. "Chief of Interpol Praises Cuba for its Fight against Drug Traffic," *Prensa Latina*, January 17, 2002.
81. Less is known about U.S. Coast Guard attitudes but informal conversations with several USCG officers led me to conclude that they are similar to those of U.S. military officers where cooperation with Cuba is concerned and tend even less to be "ideological."
82. Rafael Hernández, «De los cañones a los frijoles: las Fuerzas armadas cubanas en la posguerra fría», *Opiniones críticas y rápidas*, May 3, 1999.
83. Cubans find it odd that although many recognize that there were U.S.-inspired attempts on the life of Fidel (in official Cuban lore some 637 by 1997), there is little discussion of those on other members of the Revolution's leadership. See, e.g., the comments of Fernando Flórez Ibarra in his *Yo fui enemigo de Fidel*, Santiago de Chile, LOM, 2001, p. 89. See also Furiati, *Fidel Castro*, p. 608.

6 Cuba, the FAR, and Other Countries: Has the Search for Friends Brought Results?

1. Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, *Los Monumentos nacionales de la República de Cuba*, quoted in Jean-Guy Allard and Carlos Sariol, "D'Iberville à La Havane," Quebec City, private printing, 1992, pp. 5–8.
2. James C. M. Ogelsby, *Gringos from the Far North: Essays in the History of Canadian–Latin American Relations, 1866–1968*, Toronto, Macmillan, 1976, pp. 10–14.
3. Brian Stevenson, *Canada, Latin America and the New Internationalism: A Foreign Policy Analysis, 1968–1990*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000, pp. 97–98.

4. See Christopher Armstrong and H. V. Nelles, *Southern Exposure: Canadian Promoters in Latin America and the Caribbean 1896–1930*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1988, pp. 24, 36–39.
5. British Minister in Havana to McKenzie King, April 25, 1942, quoted in Ogelsby, *Gringos from the Far North*, p. 57.
6. James Rochlin, *Discovering the Americas: The Evolution of Canadian Foreign Policy towards Latin America*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1994, pp. 51–53.
7. Kirk and McKenna, *Canada–Cuba Relations: The Other Good Neighbor Policy*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1997, pp. 42–49.
8. The Canadian government hoped that the United Nations could find a solution to the crisis.
9. Rochlin, *Discovering the Americas*, pp. 60–63.
10. Cuba's impact on Canadian foreign policy was even greater than this. As Brian Stevenson has argued convincingly, it was in large part the Bay of Pigs invasion, the expulsion of Cuba from the pan-American system, and then the Cuban Missile Crisis that put paid to Prime Minister Diefenbaker's interest in joining the Organization of American States, although the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic also played a major role. Thus Cuban security issues impinged dramatically, if rather indirectly again, on major policy decisions taken by Ottawa. See Stevenson, *Canada, Latin America*, pp. 171–172.
11. Rochlin, *Discovering the Americas*, pp. 56–57.
12. See Canada, *Foreign Policy for Canadians*, Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1970; and Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs, "Canada and the World: A Policy Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Pierre Elliot Trudeau, May 29, 1968," *External Affairs* 20, no. 7.
13. Embassy of Canada in Cuba, *Cuba-Canadá: una mirada a cien años*, Havana, Editorial Pontón Caribe, 2003, pp. 12–14; and "Granma," January 29, 1976. Trudeau was to make three private visits to the island in the 1990s. And Fidel was the only head of state to be present at Trudeau's funeral in Montreal in September 2000.
14. It is fascinating to think what would have been the impact of revelations, made recently by historian Piero Gleijeses, that Cuba was not as involved in Angola as the United States was at the time suggested. It now appears that the accusations made regarding Havana's actions were at least in part fabricated and that the Canadian government, assuming U.S. good faith, acted here in a precipitous manner. South Africa had indeed invaded first and Havana was merely responding to calls for help from the Angolan MPLA government. Gleijeses, *Misiones en conflicto*, p. 389.
15. John Kirk et al., "Retorno a los negocios: cincuenta años de relaciones entre Canadá y Cuba," *Cuadernos de Nuestra America*, XII, 24, July–December 1995, pp. 142–159, especially pp. 148–150.
16. Sahadeo Basdeo and Ian Hesketh, "Canada, Cuba and Constructive Engagement: Political Dissidents and Human Rights," in Sahadeo Basdeo and Heather N. Nicol (Eds.), *Canada, the United States and*

- Cuba: An Evolving Relationship*, Miami, North-South Center Press, 2002, pp. 27–51, especially pp. 29–31.
17. "Realiza su duodécima graduación Colegio de Defensa Nacional," *Granma*, December 21, 2002, p. 2.
 18. See Canada's experience here in Victor Malarek, *Merchants of Misery: Inside Canada's Illegal Drug Scene*, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1990.
 19. The collapse of Spanish military influence is discussed indirectly throughout Frederick Nunn, *Yesterday's Soldiers: European Professionalism in South America 1890–1940*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1985; see also Nunn's "An Overview of European Military Missions in Latin America," in Brian Loveman and Thomas Davies (Eds.), *The Politics of Anti-Politics: The Military in Latin America*, Wilmington, DE, Scholarly Resource Books, 1997, pp. 32–40; and Hal Klepak, *Military Aspects of French Policy in Spanish America, 1871–1914*, unpublished PhD thesis, London, University of London, 1985.
 20. These admirable traditions are very visible in the FAR whose members have found many occasions to demonstrate them in Africa and Central America.
 21. See the chapters on immigration and settlement in Eduardo Torres-Cuevas et al., *Cuba-España: Poblamiento y nacionalidad*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1993.
 22. See the chapters by Charles Kingsley Webster, Ricardo Caillet-Bois, and Francisco Encina Kingsley Webster: "British, French and American Influence," pp. 75–83. Caillet-Bois: "The Rio de la Plata and the French Revolution," pp. 94–105. Encina: "The Limited Influence of the French Revolution," pp. 106–110, respectively, in R. A. Humphreys and John Lynch (Eds.), *The Origins of the Latin American Revolutions, 1808–1826*, New York, Knopf, 1965, pp. 75–83, 94–110. For Cuba, see Olga Miranda Bravo, *Cuba, USA: nacionalizaciones y bloqueo*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1996, pp. 97–141.
 23. Cruz, *El mayor*, pp. 109–111, 158. A collection of Agramonte's writings on political and military matters is in Fernando Crespo Baró (Ed.), *Ignacio Agramonte: la unión estrecha de todos los cubanos*, Camagüey, Editorial Acana, 1993, pp. 47–71.
 24. See the international cooperation section of Arias Fernández, *Cuba contra el narcotráfico*.
 25. Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith has done excellent work on this subject. See his *The Quest for Security in the Caribbean*, Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 1993.
 26. This included some 15 Sea Fury fighters that Britain sold, despite Castro's personal appeal to Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, as late as September 1958. Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, p. 1009.
 27. U.S. pressure ensured the negative response from London. *Ibid.*, p. 1242.
 28. See Arias Fernández, *Cuba contra el narcotráfico*, pp. VIII–IX. In May 1997, an E.U. study of drugs in the Caribbean stated that despite the problems caused by the U.S. embargo and Cuba's

economic difficulties, the Cubans had proved knowledgeable and helpful on a wide range of common problems in the drug area. Ibid., p. 98.

29. Ibid., p. 87.
30. Ibid., pp. 162–163.
31. Ibid., pp. 167–168, and interviews with Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff, London, April 2000.
32. Of Cuba's bilateral accords, 12 are with Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela), 6 with Commonwealth Caribbean states (Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago), 6 with Europe (Cyprus, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Spain, and Turkey), and 1 with Laos and Cape Verde. There is a memorandum of understanding in place with Canada as well as one with the United Kingdom. There are also cooperative agreements of less formality with the Netherlands (deeply involved as the main port of entry for drugs into Europe and a country with several Caribbean territories) and Germany from the European Union, and Bolivia, Costa Rica, and Paraguay in Latin America. Fernández, *Cuba contra el narcotráfico*, pp. 171–172.
33. "Entrega Reino Unido Donativo a Cuba," *Granma Internacional*, November 23, 1997, quoted in Fernández, *Cuba contra el narcotráfico*, pp. 178–179.
34. "La Aduana Cubana contra el narcotráfico," *Granma Internacional*, February 21, 1999, p. 9, quoted in Fernández, *Cuba contra el narcotráfico*, p. 182.
35. "En busca de una visión más integral del mundo," *Granma*, October 12, 2002.
36. In the Second Declaration of Havana, Cuba explained its view in classic cold war fashion. "In the face of the accusation that Cuba wishes to export its revolution, we answer that one cannot export revolutions, peoples make them. What Cuba does is give peoples, and it has already done so, an example . . . it occurs inevitably in those nations where yankee monopoly control is greatest . . ." Quoted in D'Estéfano Pisani, *Política*, p. 301.
37. Lloyd Griffith, *The Quest*, pp. 199–200.
38. Furiati, *Fidel Castro*, p. 509.
39. Some elements of this are discussed in Emilio Álvarez Montalván, *Las Fuerzas armadas en Nicaragua*, Managua, Arellano, 1994, pp. 74–77; and Alejandro Bendaña, "Hacia un Nuevo modelo de seguridad en Nicaragua," in Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera and Francisco Rojas Aravena (Eds.), *De la Guerra a la integración: la transición y la seguridad en Centroamérica*, Santiago, FLACSO, 1994, pp. 165–180.
40. See the Nicaraguan and Peruvian sections of English, *Armed Forces*, pp. 323–334, 366–401.
41. The Peruvian armed forces and government have on occasion in recent years been able to take advantage of the situation, such as in the wake of losses incurred in the war with Ecuador in early 1995.

42. For probably the best political biography of the Venezuelan president, see Richard Gott, *In the Shadow of the Liberator*, London, Verso, 2002.
43. When the Venezuelan head of state visited Havana in 1999, he beamed that the Cuban and Venezuelan peoples were both bathing "in the same sea of happiness" after their two revolutions, a remark that Cubans could have been forgiven for receiving with a grain of salt as the ninth year of the Special Period ground on. See Morley and McGillion, *Unfinished Business*, p. 36. He also called for "the unity of our two peoples, and of the revolutions we both lead. Bolívar and Martí united." Gott, *In the Shadow*, p. 25.
44. See the chapters on Venezuela and its neighbors in Francisco Rojas Aravena (Ed.), *Gasto militar en América Latina: procesos de decisiones y actores claves*, Santiago, FLACSO, 1994.
45. This does not mean that the Venezuelan forces lack nationalistic feelings or are not worried by excessive U.S. power in the region. See Gott, *In the Shadow*, pp. 225–227.
46. See the Venezuelan national chapter in English, *Armed Forces*, pp. 441–467.
47. Gott, *In the Shadow*, p. 192. This does not mean to suggest there was no echo for Venezuelan thinking in other armed forces of the region. Just the opposite is the case. But there is no intention on any of their parts to move forward with such an idea in a unipolar world where those opposing U.S. power are paying dearly for the privilege.
48. Some officers of the Venezuelan armed forces have gone on Cuban courses. For example, there are students currently at the Cuban staff college.
49. Gott, *In the Shadow*, pp. 24–31.
50. The Venezuelan opposition uses the "alliance" with Cuba as a main point of their attack against the president. See, e.g., José Toro Hardy, "El Nuevo metrópoli," *El Universal* (Caracas), May 30, 2003, pp. 1–12, where he accuses Chavez of handing his country over to a new imperial master, Cuba, which he then suggests is helping with alphabetization in Venezuela as a way of "implanting Castroist ideology." In the same article Cuba is accused of being "the only country ever to have invaded Venezuela in all its history," and that "our independence is threatened." These views are not considered extremist in today's Venezuela.
51. *Prensa Latina*, Havana, October 8, 2002.
52. *Granma*, July 1, 2003.
53. "Revista Bohemia," *LIV*, no. 38, September 21, 1962.
54. Raúl Benítez Manaut, "Seguridad y relaciones cívico-militares en México y América Central: escenarios a inicios del siglo XXI," in Athanasios Hristoulas (Ed.), *Las Relaciones cívico-militares en el nuevo orden internacional*, Mexico, Porrúa, 2002, pp. 187–224, especially pp. 200–204.
55. See virtually all the contributions in David Ronfeldt (Ed.), *The Modern Mexican Military: An Assessment*, San Diego, University of

- California San Diego, 1984; and for more background José Luis Piñeyro, *Ejército y sociedad en México: pasado y presente*, Mexico, UNAM, 1985; and the now classic Jorge Alberto Lozoya, *El Ejército mexicano*, Mexico, Colegio de México, 1984.
56. In World War II, Mexico abandoned its traditional suspicion of the United States and cooperated in an impressive fashion with Washington in defense. See e.g., María Emilia Paz Salinas, "México y la defensa hemisférica," in Rafael Loyola (Ed.), *Entre la Guerra y la estabilidad política: El México de los 40*, Mexico, Grijalbo, 1986, pp. 49–64, and in the same volume Blanca Torres, "La Guerra y la posguerra en las relaciones de México y Estados Unidos," pp. 65–82; and the Mexican chapter of English, *Armed Forces*, pp. 298–322, especially pp. 299–300.
 57. For fundamental ideas regarding the unipolar moment, see Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, LXX, 1, pp. 32–33. And for an insider's view of some of the extraordinary events around these years, see the sensational memoir of the Mexican ambassador to Havana at the time. Ricardo Pascoe Pierce, *En el filo: historia de una crisis diplomática, Cuba 2001–2002*, Mexico, Ediciones Sin Nombre, 2004.
 58. For this see Georgina Sánchez, "Three to tango: los futuros de la relación México-Cuba," in María Cristina Rosas (Ed.), *Otra vez Cuba . . . desencuentros y política exterior*, Mexico, Editorial Quimera, 2002, pp. 34–54, especially pp. 45–46.
 59. These wide-ranging issues in Cuban foreign policy are all discussed in D'Estéfano Pisani, *Política*, pp. 343–374 and at various points earlier in this work.
 60. Erubiel Tirado, "La relación cívico-militar en México: hacia la reformulación de un nuevo pacto," in Hristoulas, *Las Relaciones*, pp. 239–256, especially p. 244.
 61. "Granma," September 18, 1975. For the decline in military relations, see Pierce Pascoe, *En el filo*, p. 404, and for recent slight improvements in the overall relationship, see Noelia Sastre, "Mejora la relación con Cuba: Derbez," *El Universal*, Mexico, September 26, 2004.
 62. See the background to this in Alfredo Rangel, *Colombia: guerra en el fin del siglo*, Bogotá, Universidad de Los Andes/Tercer Mundo, 1999.
 63. The FARC appears to have consistently paid little attention to Havana's preferences and advice where conduct of the insurgency has been concerned. See James Rochlin, *Vanguard Revolutionaries in Latin America: Peru, Colombia, Mexico*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 2003, pp. 98–102.
 64. Important for an understanding of the evolution of this situation is Malcolm Deas and María Victoria Llorente (Eds.), *Reconocer la guerra para construir la paz*, Bogotá, Universidad de Los Andes/Norma, 1999; and Francisco Leal (Ed.), *Los Laberintos de la guerra: utopías e incertidumbres sobre la paz*, Bogotá, Universidad de Los Andes/Tercer Mundo, 1999.

65. See Apolinar Díaz-Callejas and Roberto González Arana, *Colombia y Cuba*, Bogotá, Ediciones Uninorte, 1998; and Carlos Medina Gallegos, *ELN: una historia contada a dos voces*, Bogotá, Rodríguez Quitos Editores, 1996.
66. More private appreciation for the Cuban effort in Haiti has, however, been forthcoming from many U.S. agencies as it has been for Cuban assistance in disaster relief and medical help in Central America.
67. Suárez Salazar, *El Siglo . . .*, pp. 176–177.
68. While praising these forums, Fidel has not hidden the difficulties Cuba has found in joining collaborative efforts with others who have accepted “neoliberalism” and where therefore “there is a strong difference between our way of thinking, our ideology, our policy really, and the thinking of many of the leaders (at those meetings) . . .” Quoted in Carlos Alzugaray, “Cuba en los ’90: reinserción e integración,” in Francine Jácóme et al. (Eds.), *Anuario de la Integración regional en el Gran Caribe 2002*, Caracas, Nueva Sociedad, 2002, pp. 241–258, especially p. 251.
69. See Alicia Frohmann, *Puentes sobre la turbulencia: la concertación política*, Santiago, FLACSO, 1990.
70. John M. Kirk, *Canada–Cuba Relations: The Other Good Neighbor Policy*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1997, pp. 133–135.
71. Stevenson, *Canada, Latin America*, p. 175.
72. James Mulvennon, *Soldiers of Fortune: The Rise and Fall of the Chinese Military–Business Complex, 1978–1988*, Armonk, NY Sharpe, 2001.
73. Gleijeses, *Misiones en conflicto*, p. 457.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 455.
75. Miguel Angel Figueras Pérez, “El Turismo internacional y la formación de *clusters* productivos en la economía cubana,” Omar Everleny et al., *Cuba*, p. 100. For the wider issues discussed here, see Lorena Barberia, “Remittances to Cuba: An Evaluation of U.S. and Cuban Government Policy Measure,” in Jorge I. Domínguez et al. (Eds.), *The Cuban Economy at the Start of the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, pp. 353–412.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 111–117.

7 The Context for the FAR at Home—*Malaise sans fin?*

1. See Armando F. Mastrapa, “Evolution, Transition and the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces,” *ASCE*, 1999, pp. 115–119, p. 115.
2. See the figures in “Termina junio con el primer millón de turistas,” *Granma*, June 30, 2003, p. 1.
3. Luis Suárez speaks of there still being more than 2,000 cultural institutions in the country, 47 art schools, 350 public libraries, and many more indicators of an immensely healthy cultural scene in the

- country, one doubtless superior to many other more prosperous parts of the hemisphere. Suárez Salazar, *El Siglo*, pp. 442–443.
4. This has been referred to repeatedly. See the works by Erisman, Gleijeses, Pavlov, and Szulc where throughout one sees the proof of this assertion.
 5. See the essays in Rafael Hernández, *Mirar a Cuba: ensayos sobre cultura y sociedad civil*, Havana, Ediciones Letras Cubanas, 1999.
 6. Three years ago a new *Ministerio de Auditoría y Control* (Ministry of Audit and Control) was created in a desperate effort to address rampant corruption in the public service. Over 8,000 seminars have so far been held involving some 330,000 personnel but it is unlikely that success has as yet crowned these efforts. See José Hernández, “Contra la corrupción,” *Tribuna de La Habana*, May 25, 2003, p. 3.
 7. This of course in no way takes away from the courage many of them show in choosing a dissident path that is far from easy and, if not with the risks to life one knows in most dictatorships, still with its fair share of lesser but still important ones.
 8. It should be noted that not only is schooling in Cuba free, but it is also paid. That is, students receive a salary for studying as long as their marks are kept up. But as many argue, pens and pencils are not free and have to be paid for usually in dollars; likewise for books and practical items like computers or even slide rules. Thus, despite free and paid education, many families simply cannot afford to send their children to school up to their level of promise.
 9. A Cuban still pays only 19 cents to attend the best ballet, opera, theater, concert, or baseball match in the country.

8 The FAR and the Politics of “No Transition”: But Who Else?

1. Fidel was born on August 13, 1926 and is thus 79. He is six months younger than Queen Elizabeth II and appears to share her excellent health. It is interesting that there is virtually no talk of the succession as something imminently problematic in the Commonwealth. Fidel will die or be incapacitated but there is little reason to think that such an event is necessarily around the corner.
2. Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, pp. 643–644.
3. See this story in Frank Mora, “From Fidelismo to Raulismo: Civilian Control of the Military in Cuba,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, XLVI, 2, pp. 25–38.
4. As early as his arrival as an exile in Mexico in June 1955, Raúl’s personality was impressing some. His future wife Hilda says of him at this time (it is worth remembering that he was 24 at the time), “it was stimulating for the spirit to talk with Raúl. He was merry, open, sure of himself, very clear in the exposition of his ideas, with an incredible capacity for analysis and synthesis.” These comments taken with so many from

- those who have worked with him more recently would lead me to believe that we are dealing here with a remarkable man, worthy of being taken seriously. See Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, p. 335.
5. See, e.g., the interview with Major-General Leopoldo Cintra Frías in which he describes Raúl as "simple, sensitive, human, and attentive to the smallest detail . . . very clear, realistic, precise," adding, "with Raúl you can speak of any kind of problem, including personal ones, however difficult they may be." Báez *Secretos de Generales*, p. 491. Other interviews in this book confirm the impression. And if it is true that there is little likelihood of serious dissent being voiced by such people in such a publication, it is equally true that what one hears in the street from serving or ex-military personnel bears out what is said in this volume.
 6. See, e.g., the comments on Raúl by Alberto Bayo, future general and ex-chief trainer of the future guerrilla force in Mexico, in Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, p. 359.
 7. An at least equally thought provoking scenario would be one in which Raúl were to die or be incapacitated before Fidel, a not unimaginable situation given that at 74 he is only five years younger than his brother and, rumor has it, in worse health. But rumors are always rife in Cuba so this last one should be taken with more than a grain of salt. Nonetheless, the minister might go before the head of state and where the succession has been so tied down for so long, and no real effort made to groom a third option, one could speculate on what might happen and depending on many other factors, it could be a real element of uncertainty.
 8. There are some 600,000 members of the Communist Party at present. The reasons for membership are many but often related to the hope that being a "militante" may bring some concrete, and material, advantages to the member. See Luis Suárez Salazar, *El Siglo XXI: posibilidades y desafíos para la Revolución cubana*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2000.
 9. Marcel Niedergang, *Les Vingt Amériques latines*, Paris, Seuil, 1969.
 10. Brian Loveman and Thomas Davies, "Instability, Violence and the Age of Caudillos," in B. Loveman and T. Davies (Eds.), *The Politics of Anti-Politics*, pp. 15–28.
 11. Rut Diamint (Ed.), *Control civil y fuerzas armadas en las nuevas democracias latinoamericanas*, Buenos Aires, Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1998.
 12. "You can do anything with a bayonet except sit on it."
 13. Brian Loveman has once again been very important in underscoring the sort of problem referred to here. See "'Protected Democracies' and Military Guardianship: Political Transitions in Latin America, 1978–1993," in *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, XXXVI, 2, summer 1994, pp. 105–189.
 14. It is interesting to note the extent to which the AIDS and cholera epidemics have been incorporated by some into the security

- agenda of nations of the Americas. Juan Domingo Silva, "La Epidemia VIH/SIDA: una situación de riesgo emergente para la seguridad," in *Estudios político-militares*, II, 4, 2nd semester 2002, pp. 37–50.
15. Alfred Stepan, *Authoritarian Brazil*, New York, Yale University Press, 1973. A wider ranging study is that of Pere Vilanova, "Fuerzas armadas y sociedad: naturaleza y funciones," in Carlos Contreras Quina (Ed.), *América Latina: una realidad expectante*, Santiago, Comisión Sudamericana de Paz, 1993, pp. 237–257.
 16. María del Pilar Díaz Castañón, *Ideología y revolución*, p. 18.
 17. Isabel Jaramillo, "La Seguridad de Cuba en los años '90," *Cuadernos de Nuestra América*, XI, 21, January–June 1994, pp. 139–158, especially pp. 141, 155.
 18. As soon as Fidel and his brother got into training and otherwise preparing for revolution, discipline became a byword for them. See Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, p. 349.
 19. "Communism with a Cuban face."
 20. There is even some debate as to whether the Chilean army was as "Prussianized" as some have argued. See William Sater, *The Great Myth*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002; and for the opposite view see the many works on the subject of Frederick Nunn, e.g. his *Yesterday's Soldiers*, and *The Time of the Generals: Latin American Professional Militarism in World Perspective*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1992.
 21. The Cuban electoral system is based on "popular democracy," a kind that is only slightly convincing to most in the Western traditions of political organization. Nonetheless Fidel has allowed for electoral changes that are at least more in keeping with Western norms than those of the past, and some authors have been convinced that there is something truly new and exciting in what they see as real democracy in Cuba. See Kaptcia, "Political Change," pp. 13–20; and Arnold August, *Democracy in Cuba and the 1997–98 Elections*, Havana, Editorial José Martí, 1999.
 22. Critics say that the army fired on the people during the 1960s "anti-banditry" campaigns against rightist elements largely organized and fully supported by the CIA. But the nuance is an important one in that those anti-Castro rebels were an organized opposition and not the spontaneous outbreaks that have been the Latin American norm where the use of the military in repression is concerned.
 23. Fidel Castro, *Un grano*, p. 127.
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
 25. While, in the view of this author, the case against the Cuban human rights record is too strongly put by Human Rights Watch, which does not put the matter in its full historic and defence context, it is nonetheless worthwhile reading their otherwise careful *Cuba's Repressive Machinery: Human Rights Forty Years after the Revolution*, New York, Human Rights Watch, 1999.

26. Probably only Costa Rica, alongside Cuba, can make such a claim in all of Latin America, and Costa Rica has no armed forces and has not had any since 1948.
27. For the story of Brazil in World War I, see Arthur Oscar Saldanha da Gama, *A Marinha do Brasil na Segunda Guerra Mundial*, Rio de Janeiro, Capemi Editora, 1982.
28. For Brazil in World War II, see Ricardo Neto Bonalume and Cesar Campiani Maximiano, *Onde estão nossos heróis*, São Paulo, Santuário, 1995.
29. For the Mexican case, see Marco Moya Palencia, *1942: Mexicanos al grito de guerra!*, Mexico, Porrúa, 1992, pp. 35–77.
30. Pope Atkins, *Latin America*, p. 287, and Horacio L. Veneroni, *Estados Unidos y las fuerzas armadas de América Latina: la dependencia militar*, Buenos Aires, Periferia, 1973, pp. 21–57.
31. This author has developed this point in more detail in his “Peacekeeping in Central America,” in David A. Charters (Ed.), *Peacekeeping and the Challenge of Civil Conflict Resolution*, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Centre for Conflict Studies, 1994, pp. 77–96, especially pp. 83–86.
32. For the Argentine armed forces at war, see Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the “Malvinas,”* London, Viking, 1989. The Peruvians also fought their terrorist groups, of course, and at times that fighting reached really severe levels.
33. It should be said that the fighting in Grenada was, from a Cuban perspective, not impressive. Fidel had asked the troops to fight to the end, which they certainly did not do. On the other hand they were totally outnumbered and outgunned. For criticism, see Frank O. Mora, “From Fidelismo to Raulismo: Civilian Control of the Military in Cuba,” unpublished paper, September 2000, p. 6.
34. See the naval and air force sections of the different national chapters of English, *Armed Forces*; and the post 1880s chapters of Robert Schiena, *Latin America: A Naval History, 1810–1987*, Annapolis, United States Naval Institute Press, 1987.
35. “Hay La Habana, y el resto es césped.”
36. There was also less documented but reasonably heavy white immigration of Mexicans from the Yucatan during the “race war” there in the mid-nineteenth century.
37. See Veneroni, *Estados Unidos*, in all its chapters to see how much this was true in the 1960s and 1970s, and Edgardo Mercado Jarrín, *Un Sistema de seguridad y defensa sudamericano*, Lima, IPEGE, 1990.
38. See all of Garrié Faget, *Organismos* and Klepak, “Confidence Building Measures,” in the Cuba–U.S. Confrontation, pp. 24–33.
39. Hugo Palma and Alejandro San Martín, *Seguridad, defensa y fuerzas armadas en el Perú*, Lima, Centro Peruano de Estudios Internacionales, 2002.
40. This can be variously interpreted. Some options have been “I accept but I do not comply,” or “I acknowledge but do not comply,” or even “I have received (the order) but will not implement it.”

41. Del Pilar Díaz Castañón, *Idcología y revolución*, pp. 98–99.
42. See Millett, “Cuba’s Armed Forces.”
43. See Ángela Ferriol Muruaga et al., *Cuba: crisis, ajuste y situación social, 1990–1996*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 1998, pp. 151–154.

9 The Military Defense of Cuba: But Can the FAR still Deter?

1. This did not apply to secret initiatives. Reagan sent General Vernon Walters, ambassador-at-large and former CIA deputy director, to Havana in 1982. Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, p. 74; and Robert Levine, *Secret Missions to Cuba: Fidel Castro, Bernardo Benes and Cuban Miami*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001, pp. 164–165.
2. H. Michael Erisman, *Cuba’s International Relations: The Anatomy of a Nationalistic Foreign Policy*, Boulder, Westview, 1985.
3. The best source for this is again Gleijeses, *Misiones en conflicto*.
4. The best source for this state of affairs is English, *Armed Forces*, but Cuba, *Fuerzas armadas*, gives a very good idea of the state of the forces at close to this time.
5. One would not wish to put too much emphasis on this being a result only of the exceptional events of early 2003 on the diplomatic stage. Many of these features of the new international order were of course visible well before and especially in the context of the earlier Persian Gulf War of 1991. See Marcel Merle, *La Guerre du Golfe et le nouvel ordre international*, Paris, Economica, 1991.
6. See the early 1990s work on these changes by authors who saw the new context for what it was in H. Michael Erisman and John Kirk (Eds.), *Cuba’s Foreign Policy Confronts a New International Order*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1991.
7. Mesa-Lago, *Are Economic Reforms Propelling Cuba*, p. 7.
8. Amuchástegui, “Las FAR,” pp. 144–145.
9. See Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, pp. 543–544.
10. These issues and an insecure Caribbean Basin are addressed in Lilian Babeo, “El Caribe: las agendas de seguridad y defensa y el impacto del 11 de septiembre,” in Francisco Rojas Aravena (Ed.), *La Seguridad en América Latina pos 11 de septiembre*, Caracas, Nueva Sociedad, 2003, pp. 212–235, especially p. 231.
11. It is extremely difficult to find out anything about the functional arrangements set in place after the Ochoa fiasco ending up with the new *Sistema Único de Vigilancia y Protección* (Combined System of Surveillance and Protection), “system” under FAR control but which includes not only MININT and the PNR but also the CDRs and State Security. For its context, see Colomer, “Los militares,” pp. 150–152.
12. Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, pp. 372–373.
13. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2001–2*, London, 2002.

14. For the story of the Cienfuegos mutiny, see Luis Rosado Eiró, *Cienfuegos: Sublevación de todo un pueblo*, Havana, Editora Política, 1997.
15. The navy did take part, however, in the revolutionary activities surrounding the aborted revolution of 1933. See Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of freedom*, pp. 659–668.
16. The main celebrations took place at an EJT farm near the Ten Years' War battlefield of La Sacra in Camagüey province in mid-summer 2003. Colonel Blas Francisco Hernández García, a host for the event, repeated this claim, which many find dubious 13 years into the Special Period. See Francisco Forteza, "Cuba ejército productivo," World Data Service, WDS-015, August 5, 2003.
17. Hernández, «De los cañones a los frijoles», p. 4.
18. "40th Anniversary of the Cuban Navy," *Granma Internacional*, September 9, 2003.
19. Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, pp. 1362–1368.
20. Arias Fernández, *Cuba contra el narcotráfico*, pp. 114–115.
21. Judson, *Cuba and the Revolutionary Myth*, pp. 242–244.
22. See Mary Alice Waters, *Marianas in Combat: Tete Puebla and the Mariana Grapales Women's Platoon in Cuba's Revolutionary War 1956–58*, New York, Pathfinder, 2003, especially pp. 27–55. For an analysis of women in Cuban society emphasizing the work that still needs to be done, see Norma Vasallo Barrueta, "El Género: un análisis de la 'naturalización,'" in Luis Iníguez Rojas and Omar Evelyn Pérez Villanueva (Eds.), *Heterogeneidad social en la Cuba actual*, Havana, Universidad de La Habana Press, 2004, pp. 91–104.
23. Del Pilar Díaz Castañón, *Ideología y revolución*, p. 121.
24. This is not to say that the Cuban army before Castro did nothing to encourage change in racial and social issues. The army, despite all its problems and as so often in Latin America, was one of the very few institutions where a black, mulato, or person from a poor background could get ahead. Thus it had become a major source of social mobility as in the case of Batista. See *ibid.*, p. 100.
25. The tradition of the "siete peso" conscript is a long one. In the 1960s, his salary was set at this sum, itself a way to obtain cheap labor for essentially civilian taskings. See Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, p. 1458. At one time seven pesos was actually worth \$7 but now that sum is about 28 U.S. cents. This pay rate was raised recently to the only slightly more princely sum of 10 pesos—39 cents—a month. It should be noted, on the other hand, that a long-service regular soldier can make well over 400 pesos a month and that this sum constitutes quite a good salary. Indeed, it is also noteworthy that members of the EJT work in an environment of military discipline, but that environment is also one where material incentives to hard and efficient work are taken as normal. For example, an EJT "soldier" who works hard can expect to earn 500 pesos in a month. Another incentive for all

- these personnel, including the EJT and the “diez pesos” recruit, is occasional access to goods in state stores sold to them in pesos. Three square meals a day matter as well.
26. Armando Nova González, “El Mercado interno de los alimentos,” in Omar Everleny Pérez Villanueva, *Cuba: reflexiones sobre su economía*, Havana, University of Havana Press, 2001, pp. 193–208, especially p. 196.
 27. This does not mean that, as in more developed countries, sons of ministers and other influential people do not find themselves in more comfortable branches of the FAR than the combat arms, e.g., or do not successfully seek jobs closer to their homes or which are less demanding than others, or indeed do not, more often than the rule, move into nonmilitary national service.

10 Conclusion

1. Interview with Major-General Néstor López-Cuba in Waters, *Haciendo Historia*, p. 54.
2. In this context it is worth noting that this high level of sons (and even daughters) of workers and farmers as officers within the FAR is also of long standing. Many of the officers recruited in the first years after the Revolution’s 1959 victory (some still serving) were, not surprisingly, from among what Thomas calls “the lumpenproletariat, bootblacks or washers of cars,” and he adds that “they owe everything to the Revolution.” This should not be forgotten if one wishes to understand the FAR. See Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, p. 1458.
3. See his essay “Nuestra América” in Centro de Estudios Martianos, *José Martí y el equilibrio del mundo*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2002, pp. 202–212; and the Introduction to that volume by Armando Hart Dávalos, especially pp. 9–10.
4. See “‘Tensión’ militar durante el resto del gobierno de Bush,” where Raúl Castro is quoted as saying that a level of military alert will be necessary, given the views of the present Bush government, for at least 2003 and 2004. The comments were made to senior commanders of the Central Army as they improved the defence of their region in case of attack. In *La Jornada*, September 14, 2003.

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- , *Crónica de un fracaso imperial*, Havana, Ciencias Sociales, 2000.
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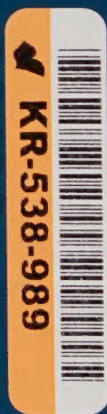
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